

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S FIGHT ON THE PLAINS, OR, HOW ARIETTA SAVED THE SETTLEMENT.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



As Arietta rode around the corner of the cabin in advance of the cavalry she saw Wild lying on the ground apparently dead. She uttered a scream as one of the redskins raised a club to strike the helpless form on the ground.

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S FIGHT ON THE PLAINS

OR,

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CHAPTER I.

THE RACE AT FORT BRIDGER.

"Here comes Young Wild West! He's ther boy what will settle ther dispute."

The speaker was a grizzled old man with gray beard and long hair that had long since lost its shade of dark brown.

He was standing before the supply store at Fort Bridger, Wyoming, where quite a crowd of cowboys and cavalymen were gathered.

There had just been a race between one of the cavalymen and a cowboy, and there was an argument going on as to who was the winner.

It appeared that the cavalryman had started the fraction of a second before the crack of the pistol had sounded, and the cowboy was only half a length behind in getting over the line at the finish.

Both claimed to have won, and Josh Harper, the old trapper and scout, had been called upon to decide it.

While it was admitted that the cavalryman had no right to start ahead of the signal, he argued that he had won, taking the actual time of the race.

Both declared that they knew they owned the best horse, and so hot became the argument that it was almost coming to blows when old Josh Harper caught sight of a dashing-looking boy, who was mounted on a clean-limbed sorrel stallion and riding up the trail leading to the old-fashioned fort.

The boy just rounded a bend that was hidden from view by a grove of trees, and with his long light chestnut hair hanging over his shoulders, sombrero tipped well back upon his head and attired in a fancy hunting suit of buckskin, he made a pleasing, not to say dashing appearance.

As the crowd looked at him, the most of them with an

expression of admiration on their faces, the boy came to a halt and looked back the way he had come.

The next minute a young girl, mounted on a cream-white broncho, came dashing up and joined him.

She was attired in a riding and hunting suit combined that was elaborate and costly, but it did not take this to make her look pretty.

The girl was what might be termed a beautiful girl, and with her golden hair hanging in profusion over her shoulders she certainly made a striking mate for the boy.

The two rode on up to where the crowd was gathered, and as they brought their horses to a halt old Josh Harper called out:

"Here yer are, Wild. Come an' settle this here dispute which is between Tarantula Tom an' ther horseback soldier. They had a race, an' they can't agree as ter who has got ther fastest horse."

"Is that so, Josh? Well, who came in ahead?"

"Ther soldier did."

"Well, he must have the fastest horse, then."

"Yes, but he started a leetle might ahead."

"Oh! I see."

"It sorter looks ter me as though it was nip an' tuck with 'em, but they both claim that they've got ther fastest horse. You kin decide about it, if yer will."

"Well, since I didn't see the race, I can't do that, Josh. But I can tell you how the argument can be settled."

"How?" and the old plainsman looked at him eagerly.

"Why, by trying it over again. That will settle the argument in a hurry."

There was a short silence, and then a cheer went up from the crowd, which numbered probably thirty men, the majority being cavalymen and men belonging to the military station.

"That's it!" cried Josh Harper. "We never thought of that, boys. Here! you two fellers has got ter ride ther race ag'in."

"I'm willin'," spoke up the cowboy. "I know that my horse kin beat that bay any time. But I don't want no startin' afore ther shot is fired, like ther last time."

It was quite evident that Tarantula Tom had been holding on that point more than anything else.

"Oh! I am willing to try again," the cavalryman hastened to say. "I believe my horse is the best of the two; in fact, I believe he is the best to be found around these diggings. I ain't got much money, but I'll lay five dollars that I can beat anyone here for a mile, out and back!"

"I'll have to take that bet, my friend," said Young Wild West, as he dismounted and stepped up. "Put up your money."

The cavalryman looked at him sharply, and then said:

"You are Young Wild West, the Champion Deadshot of the West, and you are said to be the Prince of the Saddle, too. You have got a mighty good horse, they say. But I think I have got one that is just as good. It is my own horse, too. My money paid for him. That's why I am willing to back him."

"All right, my friend. We'll make this a race of three. You and the cowboy can settle as to who is the best of the two. I will try and set the pace for you over the finish line."

The man laughed at this.

"All right," he said. "Josh Harper will hold the money."

The cowboy was willing to make it three-handed, so it was soon settled.

There was a blasted tree standing just a mile from the starting point, which was in front of the supply store.

The fort lay a little off to the left of the collection of shanties, for at the time of which we write the place was not as thickly settled as now.

Young Wild West and his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, had received a hurry call to come up to the fort, so they might help the cavalry in running down a band of rebellious Brules.

The Indians had been troublesome all winter, and when spring came, and the grass got a few inches high, they broke out, and were making lots of trouble.

Raids on settlers had been made, the game laws violated and in a few instances cruel murder had been done.

The Brules had been acting surly for some time, and now about seventy of them, under the lead of Crow Foot, one of the chiefs who had fought under Sitting Bull, had taken to the hills, defying the Government to come and get them.

It happened that Colonel Stewart, who was in command at the old blockhouse at the time, had less than fifty men there.

Young Wild West and his partners had very often acted as scouts under him, and he decided to settle the rebellion without calling for more soldiers and cavalrymen by sending for them.

So our hero and his partners had come up from Central Colorado by rail, bringing with them Cheyenne Charlie's wife, Anna; Arietta Murdock, our hero's sweetheart, and Jim Dart's sweetheart, Eloise Gardner.

The fact that Wild and Jim were but boys did not make them none the less able at the business.

They had been at Indian-fighting ever since they had

been big enough to hold a rifle to the shoulder, and what they did not know about scouting and fighting redskins was hardly worth learning.

Cheyenne Charlie, who was easily ten years their senior, was an old hand at the business. He had been a scout for the Government for several years, and all he wanted was someone to lead him, in whom he placed confidence.

Young Wild West just filled the bill, for he was cool at all stages of the game, and level-headed, as well as daring and reckless.

Added to these qualifications, he was a real athlete, a superb rider and was the recognized champion dead-hot of the West.

When we say that he was the best-known and most popular hero of the Wild West at the time of which we write there is no exaggeration in the statement.

But to the race that was ready to take place.

The inhabitants of the settlement all knew Young Wild West, and they were ready to swear by him, if we may use that expression.

Hardly a man there, outside of the soldiers, believed that the cavalryman's horse was as speedy as Spitfire, the noble sorrel stallion.

But the cavalryman, who was a second lieutenant named Laey, was a new one at the fort, and he was also a very important personage, in his way of thinking.

Old Josh Harper really was of the opinion that Tarantula Tom's buckskin mustang was the best horse, but he did not want to render a decision that way, because it had not been the right kind of a start.

When he saw Young Wild West coming he instantly decided to let him settle the dispute.

He knew that it would be settled now, and he also was firmly convinced that the sorrel stallion would easily distance either of the other two steeds.

"Git ready," he said. "When I ask if you're ready jest say yes, an' then I'll let my old Colt's navy bark. When she barks you kin light out fur ther blasted tree. Do yer understand?"

They all understood, and they promptly told him so.

The handsome and dashing young girl, who, as might be guessed, was our hero's sweetheart, Arietta, dismounted and took her place on the rickety stoop of the store, so she might watch the entire race.

The three horses were lined up to the starting line, and then the old plainsman mounted a barrel and called out:

"Are you ready?"

"Yes!" came the answer from the three contestants, as if in one voice.

Crack!

The Colt's revolver spoke and away they went.

"Fair an' square start this time," said Harper, nodding with satisfaction. "Now then, jest watch an' make sure that they all turn ther blasted three, boys."

The three racers were neck and neck and all were running fast.

Young Wild West swung off to the right a little when they were about half way to the turning point, so as to give the rivals a good chance.

In doing this they both got slightly ahead of him, but Arietta only smiled.

"Wait till they round the tree," she said to the wife of the storekeeper, who had joined her on the stoop.

The cavalryman put on a spurt as they neared the tree and when the two rounded it he had a lead of a couple of lengths.

Young Wild West was a good dozen yards behind when he came around.

But still his sweetheart smiled and looked confident.

"Here they come!" exclaimed Harper. "Now yer kin watch fur a rousin' old finish, boys!"

The lieutenant led until they were within about two hundred yards of the finish, and then the cowboy began overhauling him.

Young Wild West let the sorrel out at the same time, and when but a hundred yards from the line he shot ahead, coming over a winner by a dozen lengths.

The cowboy let out a whoop as his mustang came in second by a little more than a length, and up went his hat.

"I reckon ther dispute is settled," said the old plainsman; "an' Young Wild West wins ther five."

As the three contestants rode back to the finish line our hero was handed the money.

He took it, and turning to the defeated cavalryman, handed him his five dollars.

"I don't want this, my friend," he said. "I had no intentions of keeping it when I made the wager. Take my advice and never bet again. Your horse is a mighty good one, but there are lots that can beat him. I didn't try hard, and I did it easily. Of the two, Tarantula Tom has got the best horse, and I reckon that settles the dispute."

The cavalryman hesitated about taking the money, but he did so finally, and as he rode toward the fort there was a seowl on his face, showing plainly that he was not a little disappointed.

CHAPTER II.

READY TO SET OUT AFTER THE REDSKINS.

"Three cheers fur Young Wild West, ther whitest boy what ever straddled a horse!" shouted Josh Harper, as the defeated lieutenant turned away.

The settlers made the air ring with their cheers, and some of the troopers joined in.

But some of the latter were not very well satisfied with the way things had turned out.

They thought their comrade should have won the race, and that he might have done so if the boy had not taken part in it.

Just why anyone could have got this idea in his head is hard to say, since our hero had not interfered with either of the contestants during the race, from the start to the finish.

No one said anything, however, and Young Wild West was kept busy shaking hands for the next five minutes.

Our hero and his companions had arrived at Fort Bridger

after dark the night before, so little had been seen of them by the cowboys and cavalymen until that morning.

The majority of them had not known of their presence, in fact.

"Well, boys, I reckon you must be rather sporty up here," said Wild, as he looked at the men. "It is pretty early in the morning to hold a race like this. But there is nothing like keeping things going. Excitement is what takes away dull care. I suppose it has been rather dull around here lately. Most likely the outbreak of the Brules has warmed you up a little, though."

"That's right, Wild," the old plainsman answered, speaking for all hands. "There's been a whole lot of speculation about ther redskins. No one seems ter feel ther uprisin' ain't goin' ter 'mount ter anything, but there's them what seems ter be sorter indifferent about it. Ther colonel has give it out that there's no danger here, so maybe that's ther reason."

"We'll be after old Crow Foot and his gang before many hours, I reckon. I had a talk with the colonel last night, and it won't be very long before he will call his men together to get ready to take the trail of the redskins."

The cavalymen present looked a bit surprised when the boy said this.

As we have already stated, but few of them knew him, and many had never even heard of him.

They belonged to the Fifth, of Kansas, and had never been up that way until a month or two before.

"Come, Et," said Wild, turning to his sweetheart, "I reckon we will go back to the house and get ready to strike out after the Brules. I suppose we'll have to leave in about an hour."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a bugle call sounded from the fort for all hands to assemble.

"There it goes, boys!" the dashing young deadshot said, nodding to the men in uniform. "I reckon you've got to get ready, some of you."

They were under very good discipline, so one and all hastened for the fort.

"See here, Wild," said old Josh Harper, as our hero and his sweetheart were about to leave. "Why can't I go along on this Injun hunt? I'm jest itchin' ter git out where there's somethin' lively goin' on. I've been cooped up fur more'n a month now."

"You can go, Josh. I would like to have half a dozen good men to accompany us. You see, I have been placed in charge of the expedition, though there will be an officer over the cavalymen that are to go. If you know of five or six good men who want to go just get them together right away."

"Here's one, Young Wild West!" shouted Tarantula Tom.

"An' here's another!" exclaimed a cowboy, pushing his way forward. "Me an' three more quit ther ranch we was workin' at ther day afore yisterday, an' we're jest ready ter go huntin' Injuns."

The three he referred to promptly pushed their way to the front, and as the dashing young deadshot looked them over he saw that they were typical cowboys, who, no

doubt, were ready to fight as long as they could raise a gun.

"I reckon you'll do," he said. "That makes five, all told. You may come in handy, since the girls and our two Chinamen are going with us. I am going to take them along so they will act as a sort of decoy for the redskins. We all want to get down in Arizona as soon as possible, and I want to hurry this thing through. Unless we get at the redskins right away they may give us a long chase. We will get to a small settlement as soon as possible—one that is in the way of the rebelling Brules, and then we'll put out a bait for them. But that's all just now. Get yourselves ready so you will be able to leave at any time now."

The cowboys were delighted at the prospect.

Tarantula Tom led in a cheer for Young Wild West again, and this time everyone joined in, even to the storekeeper.

Josh Harper hastened to his cabin to get his old rifle in shape, and the cowboys pushed their way into the store to stock up with the things they would need on the trip.

Cartridges, tobacco and matches were the principal things, it seemed.

They all had blankets and lariats, and they were very useful things, even in an Indian campaign.

Wild and Arietta rode around to the house they were stopping at and found Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart awaiting them in expectancy.

They had heard the bugle call, and they well knew what that meant.

"I reckon we've got ter go putty soon, eh, Wild?" queried the scout, as he stroked his mustache and looked at his dashing young leader.

"Yes, Charlie, I suppose so. Well, the quicker we get on the trail the better. We don't have to stay here in Wyoming any longer than we can help, you know."

"That's right, Wild," Jim Dart spoke up. "But a little excitement with the redskins will do us good, I think."

Arietta had gone into the house, and she now came out, followed by Anna and Eloise.

They all seemed to be eager to get away.

It had been arranged the night before that they were to make their headquarters at some little settlement within fifty miles of the fort, where the Brules might take a notion to pay a visit.

Neither of them seemed to think that there was any great danger in going where the villainous Indians were likely to be found; but this was probably because they had been in so many adventures with redskins that they had grown used to it, and the danger connected with it was no longer taken into serious consideration.

Anyhow, all three of the girls could handle a rifle or revolver, and when it came to a fight they were to be depended on.

Arietta, who was the only one of the three who had been born and reared in the West, had much the better of it if it came to a contest, either in riding horseback or shooting, and her coolness and daring was equal to the average man.

But this was greatly due to what she had been taught from her dashing young lover.

"I reckon you girls had better get ready, if you are going with us," said Wild, after they had talked for a few minutes. "Where are the two Chinamen?"

"Me light here, Misler Wild," a meek and squeaking voice answered, and then a very innocent-looking Chinaman appeared around the corner of the house.

This was Hop Wah, the handy man of the party.

Besides being a "handy man" he was a very clever sleight-of-hand performer, a professional card sharp and a practical joker.

But no one would ever dream of it, to look at him and hear him talk.

Hop could hardly have been driven away from Young Wild West and his friends, and the fact was that they did not want him to go, anyway.

He had, by his extreme cleverness, been of the greatest aid to them in times of danger, more than once saving their lives.

This gave him a prestige that an ordinary servant could hardly get.

"So you are right here, Hop?" our hero queried. "Must have been expecting to be called upon, I reckon?"

"Lat light, Misler Wild. Me allee samee waittee for you to say 'Gittee leady to go,' so be."

"Well, I'll tell you that now. Where's Wing?"

"He allee samee lead um Melican book, so be; my blother velly muchee lazy. He learn to lead um stolies, and he makee allee samee fool of umself, so be."

"Well, you tell him to get a move on himself and help you get the pack-horses loaded. We will leave here inside of twenty minutes, unless I miss my guess."

"Allee light, Misler Wild."

The Chinaman was gone like a shot.

It was only a few minutes later when an orderly from the fort was seen approaching the house.

"Colonel Stewart wishes to see you at once, Mr. West," was the message he brought.

"Tell him I will be right there," replied the young deadshot, knowing full well what was wanted of him.

He went over a few minutes later and found that the colonel was ready for him to start out with the cavalry and hunt down the rebelling Brules.

"I have placed Second Lieutenant Lacy in command of thirty men," he said. "But he understands that he is to take orders from you. I sincerely hope that you may catch the redskins and make them surrender, Wild."

"I'll do my best, Colonel," was the reply.

"That is all I can expect of you. I dare not let more than thirty men go, as there must some remain here at the station, you know."

"Thirty will be sufficient, I think. I have six good men to go, too."

"Good! Now, you can pass the word when you are ready to set out."

CHAPTER III.

WILD AND THE LIEUTENANT TALK IT OVER.

In a trifle less than an hour from the time the race took place Young Wild West set out with his friends and the cavalymen and cowboys.

It had been an easy matter for the men at the fort to get ready, and the others were ready at any time.

Lieutenant Lacy, who had command of the detachment, was the man who had lost the race, and though our hero did not take a great deal of stock in the way he had acted, he was willing to admit that he might be a good, capable officer.

Our friends and the cowboys were content to ride along in the rear of the cavalry, but when it came time to issue some orders in regard to the way he wanted them to go Wild rode up to the head of the line and joined the lieutenant.

"Lieutenant," said he, "if we happen to strike a fresh Indian trail I want you to halt and wait for my partners and myself to try and locate them. I don't know as we will strike a trail, but we may before night."

"All right," was the rather surly rejoinder. "I don't quite understand who is to give orders here, though. I have been placed in command of thirty cavalymen, and——"

"You have instructions from the colonel to act under my orders," Wild hastened to say.

The man winced.

"There is no need of you to get sulky about it," the boy went on, coolly. "If you did not like it you should have spoken about it to your superior before leaving the fort. You could have pleaded illness and got off, most likely."

The face of the officer flushed.

It was evident that he felt the thrust keenly, and that he was bent on being decidedly contrary.

"Well," said he, shaking his head, "I shall have to rely a great deal on my own judgment."

"Certainly. That is quite right, Lieutenant Lacy," the young deadshot answered in his cool and easy way. "Let it go at that, for the present, anyhow."

Wild turned away and rode back to his partners and the girls.

"I reckon we are going to have trouble with Lacy," he said, as he joined them.

"I thought so," the scout answered. "He's sorter got an idea that no one but a commissioned officer should give him his orders, ain't he?"

"That's just about it, Charlie."

"Well, he is a conceited fellow, anyhow," Jim Dart spoke up. "See how he acted about the race this morning."

"Oh! I think he can be made to understand what he should do," Arietta ventured. "He is conceited, as you say, Jim; and he does not like Wild because his horse came in third in the race, Spitfire winning so easily. I imagine that Lieutenant Lacy is rather vindictive."

"Well, if he goes to playing any of his games on me you can bet that he'll get much the worst of it," our hero declared. "I mean to let him have his own way as far as it is practicable, but when it comes to the point I am going to have my say. Here we are, supposed to do the work of something like fifty men. We were called upon to save the expense of transporting soldiers from other places to the fort. I reckon if we have got to do the work we will have something to say about the way it is to be done."

"Every time, Wild!" exclaimed the scout.

The company was riding along a trail that led out to a settlement that was isolated.

The inhabitants of the place were principally hunters, who did quite a business in trading furs at the general store that was located there.

There were some farmers scattered about the settlement, too, and there was a big cattle ranch lying about ten miles north of it.

As yet the redskins had not interfered with either the settlement or ranch, but the last report had it that they were heading in that direction.

Wild had learned that the settlement was called Bud Creek, and that the population, including men, women and children, did not exceed fifty-five.

As the majority of those who pursued the vocation of hunting would not be at home, the redskins would have an easy thing if they made a raid.

This had all been talked over the night before with the colonel at the fort, and our hero was satisfied that they could do no better than to go there and lay a trap for the Brules.

The colonel had given him full power to act, but it seemed that the officer in command of the cavalry was not inclined to have it that way.

The party kept on until noon, when they halted in a wild spot that had the appearance of the foot of a white man never having trodden the soil there, save that the trail ran along close to it.

It was one of the picturesque spots to be found in Wyoming, with the undulating plain bearing away to the east and the towering mountain peaks to the west and north; while to the south the forest stretched as far as the eye could reach.

A brook of clear water flowed at the very edge of the camp, and as the spring grass was just in condition to furnish ample fodder for the horses, there was nothing for them to worry about in that direction.

The only thing that really bothered Young Wild West was the fact that the officer in charge of the cavalry was not in sympathy with him.

While the noonday meal was being prepared he went over to the lieutenant and got in conversation with him.

"I want to ask you a question, lieutenant," he said, as he leaned against the wheel of a wagon which contained the supplies that had been brought from the fort.

"Go ahead and ask all the questions you have a mind to, Young Wild West," was the reply.

"Well, then, what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, whatever," and the man shook his head as though he meant it.

"But you don't seem to like the idea of working under my instructions."

"You are but a boy, Young Wild West. I am a man experienced in military tactics. If I were not I would not be here."

"That is true. But how much experience have you had at fighting hostile Indians?"

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders.

"Very little, I reckon, lieutenant. Well, I have had lots of experience. I am glad to say that I have been of the greatest of aid to the military forces of this part of the country, many times, Lieutenant Lacy. I was born

and reared here, and it has been my lot to have to fight my way through. But that may not interest you as much as this will."

Wild handed him an official document which had been presented to him by the general in command of the army when he was but seventeen years of age, which was to the effect that he should be recognized by all the army officers he came in contact with, and that his services as an adviser and scout should always be accepted by them whenever he saw fit to offer them.

The officer read it over carefully.

"I did not know you were as important as that, Young Wild West," he said, handing back the document. "I never heard of you until this morning."

"That's all right, lieutenant. Now look this over."

The boy handed him the order he had received from the colonel at the fort the night before, which placed him in full charge of the cavalry that was to accompany him on his search for the rebelling Indians.

This was read by Lacy, too, and when he handed it back he nodded and said:

"I am under your orders, Young Wild West. I'll admit that I did not like it when I was told that you were to give me orders, because you are but a boy. It is all right, though. Maybe you know more about the business than I do."

"Well, I don't want any friction, lieutenant. You ought to understand what I am driving at. Colonel Stewart sent for me, so he might save considerable expense to the Government. He places great faith in me, and I am going to see to it that he is not going to be disappointed. Trailing and fighting hostile redskins is something that both my partners and myself are really fond of. Why, even the girls we have with us rather like the danger that is attached to it."

"There is one point that I must confess that I thought was very foolish on your part, Young Wild West. I could not understand, for the life of me, why you should bring the young ladies with you."

"Well, I'll endeavor to show you why before we get through."

"Oh! I suppose you know, of course."

The lieutenant seemed to be mollified, and quite willing to give in to the dashing young deadshot.

"You have a splendid horse," he said, changing the subject. "I really thought mine was one that could not be beaten in a race. I really think he could beat the cowboy's buckskin if I had another chance; but I know your sorrel stallion is too much for him."

"Well, Spitfire is an exception in the way of horse-flesh," laughed Wild. "No one should feel sore if they could run a close race with him. I really believe that he is the best horse in the West, lieutenant."

"I feel certain of it, Wild."

The officer was fast melting down now. He called our hero by his nickname.

They kept up the conversation until the call came for dinner, and when they parted they were on pretty good terms.

But there was no doubt that the lieutenant felt that

he was humbled by being put under a mere boy, who was not even bound in the service.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLEVER CHINAMAN.

The dinner was eaten, and when it was over it was decided that they should wait half an hour and give the horses a chance to rest and enjoy the good fodder that grew in abundance along the edges of the brook.

It was just about this time that a shrill yell sounded from a clump of bushes near the camp, and as all eyes were turned in the direction it came from Hop Wah, Young Wild West's Clever Chinaman, as he was sometimes called, was seen running toward them, three cavalymen in pursuit.

"Hey, there! What's the trouble?" asked our hero, as he started to meet them.

"The blamed heathen has won all our money," came the reply from the foremost of the cavalymen. "He's got trick dice, and he cheated us. I found him out, and when I went to grab him he let out a yell and started to run."

"I reckon I'll soon settle it for you," replied the boy, who well knew what a cheat Hop was when he got into any kind of a gambling game.

The four who had been gambling were quickly surrounded by a crowd, all hands looking expectant, the most of them wearing broad grins on their faces.

"I reckon I know somethin' about that heathen's ways of gamblin'," remarked old Josh Harper, as he took a fresh chew of tobacco. "He cleaned me out of thirty dollars once, with a double-headed cent. Oh! he's a might smart heathen, he is."

The lieutenant came forward and was about to discipline the three cavalymen for what they had done, but Wild quickly made him change his mind, and when he called upon Hop to explain, Lacy listened.

"We play lillee gamee dicee," the clever Chinaman said. "Me havee vely muchee luck, so be, and me allee samee win seven dollee."

"Yes, but look at the dice he was using to beat us with!" exclaimed one of the victims, holding out two dice, which he had picked up when the game had broken up in a row. "There ain't anything but fives an' sixes on 'em. When we threw we had regular dice, but every time it came his turn he changed 'em and threw with these. There ain't no wonder why he won."

"No, that's right," our hero retorted. "Hop, just give them back what you took from them."

"Allee light, Misler Wild."

The victims were surprised to see how willing he was. He pulled out the money, and counting it over, handed each the exact amount he had lost, showing what an excellent memory he had.

But he managed to get back the trick dice before he did, however.

"Now then," said Wild, looking at the cavalymen and cowboys particularly, "you take my advice and don't gamble with Hop. No matter what kind of a game you play with him, he is bound to win. It is a way he has. He is too clever with cards and dice for ordinary people. He is a regular magician, and he can do what he likes without being seen do it. It must have been an accident that he got caught with his trick dice."

"Yes, it was an accident," admitted the man who had made the discovery. "Two of ther dice happened ter roll a little too far, and when I picked 'em up I happened to notice that there was a six in two places on one of 'em. Then I looked at 'em and found out what they was."

"Me no undelstand how um dicee gittee lat way," declared Hop, shaking his head and looking as innocent as a lamb.

"Huh!" exclaimed one of the men who had been in the game. "You don't understand, eh? Why, you're a regular sharp."

"That's just what I told you," said our hero. "Now you all know enough to let him alone if he proposes any kind of a gambling game. Lieutenant, there has been no harm done, so you may as well let the matter rest as it is."

"That is right," was the reply. "But you say that the Chinaman is a sleight-of-hand performer. What can he do?"

"Well, I reckon we have got time, so he will show you. Hop is always ready to perform a little trick."

"Lat light, Mislér Lieutenant," and Hop bowed and smiled at the officer.

Then he gave a start, and stepping up close to the lieutenant picked something from his shoulder.

Perhaps he did not exactly do this, but it seemed so, anyhow.

What he held in his hand was the half-eaten wing of a prairie chicken.

"You allee samee cally um glub light aloud with you, so be," he said, with a grin, as he tossed the bone away.

The officer laughed.

"That was done very quickly," he said. "Let's see you do it again."

"Me no do it some more, so be; you no gottee no more chicken wings."

"Oh! Well, find something else, then."

The lieutenant's coat was open, and thrusting his hand under it, Hop pulled out a pack of cards.

"You allee samee likee play poken, so be," he said, as he spread the cards open and looked at them.

"Gracious!" cried the officer, turning red. "I didn't see the cards in your hand when you reached under my coat."

"No! Me no havee in um handee; me takee outee you poken."

The lieutenant turned still redder.

He saw that some of his men were laughing at him.

They seemed to think that the Chinaman really had taken the cards from his pocket.

The fact was that he was strongly against gambling, and if he had been caught with a pack of cards on his person it made it look bad for him.

"That was very good," he managed to say, trying to

laugh it off. "Hop, you are very clever, indeed. One would actually think that the cards really were in my pocket."

"Lat light."

Hop was now counting the cards.

"One card allee samee gone," he said, after he had gone over the deck in a careful manner. "Um ace of spades no here, so be."

"Is that so? Maybe you have it in your pocket. You might have left it there when you took the cards out to make out you drew them from beneath my coat."

"Me no havee um cards," declared Hop, shaking his head. "You allee samee havee. Maybe you no knowee you havee, but you havee, allee samee."

Some of the cavalymen laughed outright at this, and the officer looked at them angrily.

But he said nothing just then.

"You mustee havee um ace of spades, so be," insisted the clever Chinaman. "You please lookee in you poken."

"No; I haven't no ace of spades," was the quick reply. "I never carried cards in my pockets in my life. I never played a game of cards, nor have I gambled in any way."

"You no play marbles when you allee samee lillee Melican boy?" queried the Chinaman, innocently.

"Well, yes, I might have done that."

"Len you allee samee gamble, so be. Lat um way Melican mans first learned to gamble, so be. Me knowee, allee light."

This remark caused a laugh all around.

The lieutenant was now quite nettled.

He felt that he was being made the victim of a cruel joke.

But he did his best to keep cool and make the best of it, for he had asked that the Chinaman should show some of his cleverness in the art of so-called magic.

"Well, if you say I have the card on my person I suppose I will have to look and see," he remarked.

Then he felt in his pockets under the coat and soon pulled out a card.

It was the ace of spades, sure enough!

A shout of laughter went up from the lookers-on.

"Very clever," said the lieutenant, trying to smile. "But we all know that you put the card there."

"Me no puttee lere," declared Hop, looking at him in an injured way. "You havee um cards allee timee, and when me takee outee um pack me no gittee um ace of spades."

"Yes, it looks that way; but we all know that you had the cards to begin with, and not I."

"Allee light, len. Now me showee nicee lillee tick with um cards."

He shuffled them carefully and asked the lieutenant to select one.

This Lacy did, though he hesitated about doing so.

"I don't know much about cards," he said. "But I think I know the name of this one."

He showed it to some of those who were standing behind him and they saw that it was the king of diamonds.

"You allee samee tear um card in lillee pieces, and len givee me um pieces, so be."

"I will do that," was the reply.

Lacy quickly tore the card into about twenty pieces.

Then Hop took them and began rolling them about in the palms of his hands, keeping the pieces concealed as he did so.

"Me makee um pieces allee samee come together, so be, and makee um card allee light," he declared.

"If you can you are a wonderful magician," was the retort.

"Me do it, so be."

Suddenly the Chinaman opened his hands and a card slowly unrolled and partly flattened out.

The torn pieces had vanished and there was the king of diamonds just as it had been before the tearing process.

"Well, that beats me!" exclaimed the lieutenant, turning away.

CHAPTER V.

WILD QUILTS THE LIEUTENANT AND HIS MEN.

The cavalymen and cowboys declared Hop to be a very clever sleight-of-hand performer, and when he had shown them a couple of more tricks it was time to be on the move again.

"That pig-tailed galoot is a whole lot smarter than anyone would take him ter be," observed Tarantula Tom to his cowboy companions. "I reckon it would be a good idea ter try an' learn some of his tricks. He ought ter be a rattlin' poker player."

"Well, yer jest heard Young Wild West say that anyone as played with him would sure lose their money," one of them replied. "I ain't goin' ter tackle him, an' that's sartin."

In a few minutes the pack-horses had been loaded and then the party set out, taking the trail that led over the plains to the settlement called Bud Creek.

In half an hour they were riding along over the wide stretch of short green grass, the bright sun shining upon it reflecting the green into the blue sky above.

"This are what yer might call a putty sight, I s'pose," remarked Cheyenne Charlie, who was riding close behind the dashing young deadshot. "Anyone as ain't used ter bein' on ther prairie would think it was immense, I s'pose."

"That's right, Charlie," replied Wild. "It certainly makes quite a picture, though it would be a pretty tame-looking one if it was painted, with our party riding along in this easy way. A band of redskins, with their war paint on, would add to the picture, providing they were heading toward us at full split."

"Yes, that would surely put the finishing touch to the picture, Jim Dart spoke up. "But we are not likely to have such a thing happen, so we will have to let the picture go as it is. There are not enough in Crow Foot's gang to make him feel like tackling this bunch, I reckon."

After a while our hero fell back and began questioning old Josh Harper about the settlement, and how it was situated.

He learned that it lay on the bank of a shallow creek,

faced on one side by a strip of timber a mile in width, and on the other three sides by the rolling prairie.

"We want to get to the timber and approach from that way," was the decision of the dashing young deadshot.

He communicated this to Lieutenant Lacy, who nodded assent.

About four in the afternoon they came to the timber, and then Harper told them that the settlement was not more than fifteen miles distant.

"This is all right, I reckon," said our hero. "But the first tall tree we come to I want Jim to climb it and take a look around. If the Brules are anywhere in this vicinity this timber would be the place where they would be hanging out."

A couple of miles into the woods they found just the kind of a tree that was suitable for the purpose.

Jim Dart, who was an expert climber, dismounted as soon as a halt was called, and then all hands watched him as he went up with the agility of a squirrel.

The tree was a tall pine, and the branches were just so the boy could go up in a hurry.

Jim did not stop until he got very close to the slender top.

He found that he could see over the biggest part of the tree in the woods, and as he cast a glance around him he picked out the little settlement right away.

It lay about a dozen miles to the left.

The atmosphere was devoid of anything like mist and he could see it plainly.

After satisfying himself that it was peaceful there, he turned his gaze off to the right.

Then it was that he gave a violent start.

Though he had almost expected to see Indians, the sight of a band of them approaching the timber at a distance of about ten miles from it gave him a surprise.

But he recovered himself quickly and watched them, trying to count their numbers.

He could only estimate, however, and he finally decided that there were more than fifty of them.

That they were hostile was certain, as no band of friendly Indians would come so far from the reservation.

Having satisfied himself that they were heading in the direction of the settlement, Jim started to descend the tree.

He was not long in reaching the ground, and in answer to the expectant look Wild gave him, said:

"The redskins are coming!"

"What!" exclaimed the young deadshot, looking surprised.

"That's right. The settlement lies off to the left and the redskins are riding toward it from the right, with the timber strip between."

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "I reckon we're goin' ter git inter it quicker than we expected."

"Well, the sooner the better," Wild answered.

Jim gave him all the information he had been able to get by looking from the tree-top, and then a plan of action was decided upon.

Lieutenant Lacy allowed Wild to lay out the whole thing, he appearing rather indifferent.

The boy noticed this, and looking at him, said:

"What's the matter, Lieutenant? You don't seem to be satisfied."

"Oh! yes, I am," was the reply. "You are running things."

Wild's eyes flashed at this.

He had thought that the difficulty was over, but now the man was showing his true feelings again.

"You can do as you like," he said. "But if there is anything that goes wrong, and it is your fault, you will have to take the consequences. You can consider that you and I are done, Lacy. I will fight this thing out in my own way, and you can take your men and ride back to the fort, if you want to."

"Hold on! Don't say that, Young Wild West. I know that you have been placed over me, and of course I will have to do as you say in the matter. I assure you that I will obey your commands."

"No, you won't. You and I are done, I just said. When I say a thing I generally mean it. Don't say any more, or we may get in trouble. I wouldn't hesitate to thrash you, even if you are a lieutenant. One thing, I don't propose to report your actions to your superiors."

Wild turned from him and walked to his horse.

The lieutenant looked after him in silence, his brow darkening.

But he did not try to smooth it over with the young deadshot.

Probably he had seen about enough of him to know that he would be treading on dangerous ground if he did.

"That galoot of a lieutenant is so mad because I have been placed over him in command that he has made me decide to go it alone," said Wild, when he reached his partners and the girls. "Jim, just call Josh Harper and the cowboys. I want to know if they are going with us, or if they want to remain with the cavalry. The parting time has come. We will light out for the settlement, and try to get there, so we will be able to help them fight the Indians to-night. The redskins won't attack the place before dark, I am sure. This is going to be a fight on the plains, and we have got to win."

They were not surprised to hear what our hero said, since they had heard the conversation between him and the lieutenant, or enough of it to let them get a line on what was being said.

The old plainsman and the cowboys came forward at once.

"We're goin' ter stick to you, Young Wild West," Harper said. "We started out with yer, an' we'll stick to yer, if we have ter go under by doin' it!"

"That's right!" cried Tarantula Tom. "Hooray fur Young Wild West!"

But Wild held up his hand and checked them from cheering.

"There are no redskins close enough to hear you, boys," he said. "But don't do it. If you are going with me, come right on."

The plan had been that our friends were going to leave the cavalry camped in the woods, anyhow, so there was really nothing strange about their leaving.

The only thing was that they were leaving the cavalrymen to fight it out their own way, and to obey the orders of their officer.

The majority of the men seemed loathe to see Young Wild West and his friends leave that way, but they said nothing, probably feeling pretty sure that the lieutenant would do nothing against the wishes of the young deadshot.

Waving an adieu to them, Wild and his party rode away, making a straight cut in the direction Dart said the settlement lay.

The pack-horses were put to a quick pace, the Chinamen urging them along, as though they felt that they were getting away from danger.

That there was danger Wild knew, for if Jim Dart was right in his calculations as to the distance the Indians were away, and they chose to ride right on to the settlement, our friends might come in contact with them before they reached there.

"Keep them going, Hop," he said, nodding encouragingly to the Chinaman. "Wing, you stick right to your brother. Don't let the horses lag any. They can have a good rest after they get to Bud Creek. That will be about as far as we will have to go, I reckon."

"Allee light, Misler Wild," came from the two Celestials as if in one breath.

They soon left the cavalrymen out of sight.

The course they took was right along close to the woods, and in about twenty minutes they came in sight of the settlement.

It was still more than five miles distant, and as it was getting near nightfall, some of the housewives had started fires and were no doubt cooking the supper, for smoke could be seen rising from the chimneys.

Three miles farther on and our friends were treated to something in the way of a surprise.

A yell rent the air, and out of the woods came the band of redskins Jim had seen approaching!

CHAPTER VI.

WILD IS CAUGHT BY THE REDSKINS.

The Indians were so close upon Young Wild West and his friends when they burst from the woods that there was really little chance to put up a telling fight.

If it had not been for the girls the boys and men might have made a good showing.

But they were afraid to open fire unless the Brules did.

The painted fiends did not do this, but scattered and surrounded the party, all the while yelling and brandishing their weapons.

Having recovered from his surprise, Wild singled out the chief, who sat on his horse in the background at the edge of the woods, and called out:

"Hello, there! Crow Foot, I want to talk to you."

It is hardly likely that the chief heard the words, but

he saw the motions of the young deadshot, and knew what he wanted.

He began waving his hands for his braves to keep quiet, and in a few seconds the yelling ceased.

Then Wild boldly rode up to the chief.

"What are you trying to do, Crow Foot?" he asked, coolly. "I reckon you had better go back to the reservation. You will surely get yourself in trouble if you don't. The cavalry is after you."

"Ugh! Young Wild West talk with a tongue that is crooked," retorted the Brule, his eyes flashing scornfully. "Me very glad to get the great paleface boy and his friends. Injuns have plenty fun now."

"So you know me, do you?" Wild queried, just as calmly as though there was not the least danger threatening him. "Well, I am glad of that. Maybe you'll know how to use me. One thing about it, you don't dare to harm us. If you should do that you would all be cleaned up in short order."

"Ugh!"

Crow Foot's eyes blazed with a peculiar light.

It was quite evident that he hated the dashing young deadshot, no doubt remembering his daring deeds when the Sioux were subdued but a few months before.

Crow Foot had been one of their allies, and he had narrowly escaped being caught by Wild and his partners.

Our hero did not know this much, but he did know that the chief had seen him before.

"Young Wild West will throw his gun on the ground," said the chief, after a pause.

Wild obeyed, and as the rifle struck the ground he spoke sharply to his horse.

Spitfire bounded toward the trees like a shot, and the sinewy left arm of the boy caught the old chief about the waist, pulling him from the back of his pony as if by magic.

Wild had him behind the trees in a jiffy, and then he brought his horse to a halt.

"Now then, Crow Foot, you just order your braves to let my friends go!" he exclaimed, placing the muzzle of a revolver against the forehead of the astonished chief. "Do as I say, or I'll put a hole right through your head!"

Crow Foot gave a gasp as he felt the deadly tube pressing against his flesh, and when the words of the boy fell upon his ears he knew that he was pretty close to death.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed.

"Do as I say," commanded Wild.

Already some of the braves were rushing that way.

"Get back, you red galoots!" shouted the boy. "Come any nearer and I will blow your chief's head off! I mean what I say!"

Then the chief called out something in his own language and instantly a change came over the redskins.

Wild understood what the chief said, pretty well.

He knew his commands had been carried out.

"Charlie," he said, as soon as he saw that the Indians spread away from his friends, "go on, all of you. I will come a little later. If I can't you will know what to do."

"All right, Wild," came the reply.

The next minute they were all on the move, the redskins watching them in a restless way.

Crow Foot was lying across the neck of Wild's horse,

and as the revolver in the boy's hand was kept pressed against his head, he saw fit to remain silent.

But Wild knew that if he was going to get away from them it would be more by good luck than anything else.

The moment he let the chief go he would be fired upon by the braves, who were watching him closely.

But the trees might enable him to escape the bullets.

He glanced ahead and picked out the course that he meant to follow.

But he wanted to allow his friends to get a safe distance from the spot before he made any move.

It surely was an uncomfortable position that the old chief was placed in, but that could not be helped.

Anyhow, Wild knew that he would not hesitate to put him in a worse one, if he only got the chance.

"Take it easy, you treacherous old galoot," he said, as he felt his prisoner trying to get into a slightly different position. "I reckon you are not going to get away. If you try it I'll just press the trigger of my gun, and then you'll light out for the Happy Hunting Grounds in a hurry. Just take it easy."

"Ugh!" grunted the helpless Brule.

Wild was not only watching the band of Indians, but his companions, as well.

He saw that they were rapidly leaving the scene.

They had swung out on the prairie a little, probably so they might ride into Bud Creek from the left.

As the boy thought the matter over a daring resolve came into his head.

"Why not ride off through the woods and take the chief with him?"

It would surely be worth trying, as the braves would be a little careful about shooting at him, for fear that they would hit the chief.

He waited there for fully five minutes and then he resolved to make the attempt.

But there were plenty of bushes and undergrowth in the place, and the brave boy had been unable to see all that was transpiring.

As he spoke to his horse to go forward two redskins suddenly sprang up before him.

One of them seized the sorrel by the bit and the other struck a sweeping blow at Wild with a club.

In dodging the blow the boy let go his hold upon the chief.

Crow Foot dropped the ground, landing on his feet.

Craek!

Wild fired at the Indian who had assailed him just as he was swinging the club to make another craek at him.

The brave staggered back, shot through the heart.

Down he went to rise no more.

Craek!

In less than a second he fired again, this time dropping the brave who had hold of the sorrel's bit.

Then with a mighty leap the noble steed bounded away.

But luck was against the brave boy, it seemed.

Spitfire hardly got twenty feet from the spot when he stumbled over a rotten log.

Wild was thrown over his head, landing in a pile of thick bushes.

The horse recovered himself and galloped away, and

before our hero could extricate himself from the bushes half a dozen redskins were upon him.

He made a desperate fight, but the odds were greatly against him and he was quickly overpowered and disarmed.

"Well, I did my best, anyhow," he thought, as he was dragged out into an open spot. They haven't hurt me much, so far, anyhow."

One thing about it, Crow Foot did not seem inclined to kill the boy just then.

He gloated over his capture, though, and seemed to be delighted, beyond measure.

"Young Wild West heap much fool!" he exclaimed, as he stepped up and stood over his helpless captive. "Crow Foot will fix him by and by."

"Go ahead, you sneaking coyote!" was the spirited rejoinder. "I am not afraid, and you know it, Crow Foot. I am not a coward."

"Heap much fool!"

"All right. You can have it that way if you want to. But you will find out differently, I guess. Just wait till the soldiers come."

"Soldiers no come. They at the fort; not many there. Crow Foot know."

This satisfied Wild that they did not know of the close proximity of the detachment of cavalry.

He wondered whether or not Lieutenant Lacy would come on that way or stay where he had left him with his men.

If he did come on the chances of his getting away from the redskins were good, and if he did not he would have to depend on his partners.

The chief now turned from him and issued orders to different braves, who were no doubt those he depended upon to carry out his commands.

Wild realized that they meant to camp right there.

It was not long before he was dragged to a tree and bound to it in a standing position.

From what he could catch of what was said by the chief the band was to remain there until they were ready to make a raid upon the settlement.

But just when they intended to make the raid he could not tell.

"If they only let me alone until after it gets good and dark I reckon I'll stand a chance," he thought. "Charlie and Jim will find a way to get me out of this, and I hope they do. I don't want the help of the cavalry in this matter, if we can get along without it."

CHAPTER VII.

WILD SHOWS HOW HE CAN FIGHT.

It did not take the Indians long to fix up their camp.

They had no tepees to put up, and there were no squares or children with them.

They did not even have a dog, which was something

strange, since a band of Indians without a lot of barking curs at their heels was somewhat out of place.

But when Crow Foot and his braves left the reservation they had to do it in a hurry, and in the dead of the night, at that, as they were being watched by the Indian police.

They had succeeded in getting away, and since they had been free to follow the style of their forefathers they had slaughtered several whites and burned more than a dozen houses.

Cattle had been killed by them, too, and they had plenty of meat on hand just then.

That they were not afraid of being located was evident, for a couple of fires were lighted when the sun was getting low in the west, and then the work of broiling meat was started.

The creek that ran along the settlement two or three miles to the north of them was right at hand, and the grass was good at the edge of the woods.

Nothing more could be asked for by the Brules.

They had food and water for themselves, as well as their horses.

Wild was not disturbed for the best part of an hour.

The fact that he had shot two of the Indians did not seem to set them any more against him than they had been before it happened.

It was not until it began to grow dark that the old chief came to him.

"Young Wild West heap much fool," he said.

"You have told me that already," replied our hero in his cool and easy way.

"He great brave; heap much fight."

"Maybe you have got that right, Crow Foot. I reckon I am not afraid to fight you, or any of your braves."

"Young Wild West want to fight?" asked the chief, looking at him expectantly.

"Yes, I want to fight. Just give me the chance, that's all."

"Crow Foot give you chance."

The chief turned and called to a powerful-looking redskin, who, by the head-dress he wore, was a chief of the minor class.

As the Indian stepped forward Wild saw that he was fully six feet in height, and that his muscles shone out in bold relief.

He seemed to be a foe worthy of a very big man, much less a mere boy.

But Wild never once grew uneasy.

It made little difference to him how big an Indian was, if he had to fight him.

They were all alike to him.

"Young Wild West will fight Bull Tail," said Crow Foot. "Bull Tail is the strongest of the Brules; he great brave."

"All right," answered Wild, coolly. "I reckon I'll give him all he wants. Just let me loose."

The willingness of the young paleface to fight the giant Indian surprised those who saw and heard him.

But they all had heard about Young Wild West, more or less, and they had put him down as a wonder in the way of a paleface boy.

Bull Tail smiled, as though he felt that he would have an easy victory, indeed.

When Wild saw that he did not have a single weapon in his belt he was not a little surprised.

Nine times out of ten Indians fought with knives when they indulged in duels with whites.

But it was evident that this fellow meant to use the weapons that Nature had provided him with, the same as the hated palefaces were wont to do when they had difficulties to settle among themselves.

But Bull Tail had been educated at the school on the reservation and he had learned the ways of the palefaces pretty well.

He had taken to boxing and wrestling, and the fact was that he had bested many who thought themselves pretty well up in this line of business.

A word from the chief and Wild was liberated.

He rubbed his wrists and ankles, where the ropes had served to prevent the free circulation of his blood, and this done, he coolly nodded to the big redskin and said:

"How are you going to fight, Bull Tail?"

"I will fight the same as the palefaces fight in a ring," was the reply. "I will give you a very good chance, if you know how to fight."

"Well, I happen to know a little about the game. You are a great deal bigger and heavier than I am, but I reckon I'll manage to give you all that is coming to you."

The redskin smiled.

He was what might have been called a pretty good-looking redskin if he left the hideous red and yellow paint off his face and wore a civilized dress.

But in his present make-up, which was of the barbarous pattern of his fighting forefathers, he looked to be as they had looked.

He motioned for the redskins to form a ring, which they promptly did, closing up tightly, so our hero would have no chance to dash through and make his escape.

But Wild had no notion of trying to make his escape just then.

He was bent on lowering the colors of the young chief, who put himself up as a fighter.

Wild was trained to all sorts of athletic work, and being strong and active, and possessed of a coolness and judgment that could not be surpassed, he really felt that he could make short work of the red man.

He stepped to the centre of the ring willingly enough.

"What kind of a game is this going to be, Bull Tail?" he coolly asked, as he faced the powerful Brule.

"Fight as the white men fight in the ring; no hit when down," was the reply.

"Oh! all right, then. Just say when you are ready."

"Crow Foot will say the word; then we fight."

"Good! Go ahead and say it, Crow Foot."

"Fight!" exclaimed the old chief.

The Indian advanced toward the boy, his fists doubled and in quite a boxing attitude.

Wild saw right away that his opponent had learned just about enough to make a fool of himself with an expert at the game.

While he did not call himself an expert, compared with a professional boxer, he did know lots of the tricks that went with the game.

Added to this, he had a way of always doing the right thing at exactly the right time, and this was the secret of his success in that line.

He kept his hands at his sides, and as the big Indian struck at him he jumped back out of the way.

A howl of derision went up from the painted braves, they no doubt thinking that he was afraid of his opponent.

But such was not the case, as the reader knows.

As Bull Tail struck at him again the boy stepped nimbly aside, and then as the redskin went past him from the force of the empty blow, he landed on his ear with his right, sending him staggering to the other side of the ring.

A simultaneous grunt came from the Indians.

Bull Tail had certainly received a hard blow.

The blood was trickling from his ear.

This served to enrage him, however, and with a howl like that of a wild beast, he leaped toward the boy again.

Spat!

This time Wild caught him squarely on the mouth, and it is safe to say that the redskin's teeth would never be like they were before the blow landed.

He staggered and put both hands to his mouth.

Biff!

Our hero caught him one on the ribs, and with a gasp on his lips, he doubled up like a jack-knife.

Spat!

It was a straight left that Wild sent out this time and it landed squarely on the jaw of Bull Tail.

Down he went like a log.

"I reckon that settles him," said Wild, turning to the old chief. "Is he the best fighter you have got, Crow Foot?"

There was a scowl on the face of the leader of the Indian uprising, but he made no reply just then.

A couple of the braves picked up the fallen Indian and carried him out of the ring.

He had been beaten fairly, and they all knew it.

And the dashing boy with the long chestnut hair had done it with the greatest of ease!

This was what surprised them.

A word from Crow Foot and two stalwart braves seized Wild.

They did not attempt to drag him to the tree again, but stood waiting for further orders.

The young deadshot was now looking for a chance to break away from them and make his escape.

It was fast growing dark and the light from the blazing campfire illumined the scene.

Just as he was thinking of breaking away the old chief said:

"Young Wild West will fight Little Buck with hunting knives!"

"All right!" exclaimed Wild. "I am ready. Just give me my own knife, and I will soon make Little Buck sick. I reckon."

The boy meant to make quick work of it, and then try for his liberty.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOP SURPRISES THE STOREKEEPER.

Cheyenne Charlie did not much like the idea of leaving Wild with the Indians, and neither did Jim Dart.

But there was nothing else to do, under the circumstances.

The girls must be got to the settlement, and that was all there was to it.

Old Josh Harper shook his head as they rode away, but he, too, knew it was for the best.

The cowboys acted very much as though they would rather stay and fight it out, but they looked to Young Wild West's partners to lead them now, and they did as the rest did.

They rode behind the two Chinamen, who were leading the two pack-horses, and did what they could to help them.

When they were half a mile from the spot, and found that they were not being pursued, they felt a little easier.

"We'll git ther gals to ther settlement, an' then we'll see about gittin' Wild, if he ain't able ter git away afore that," said the scout. "I reckon this is what yer kin call a peceoliar state of 'fairs, or somethin' very much like it."

"It sartinly is," nodded Josh Harper. "Ther red varmints give us a big surprise when they came out of ther woods. Nobody thought they was so close, I reckon."

"Wild will get the best of them, if they don't shoot him down by creeping up behind the trees," said Arietta, confidently. "He has been in many a worse serape than that. Anyhow, he has got the chief in his power, and they won't dare to do anything while that lasts."

They rode on and soon they were quite near the settlement.

Women and children could be seen, but few men.

"I reckon most of ther men-folks is away," observed Harper, shrugging his shoulders. "That'll make it all ther worse when ther Injuns come ter make ther raid."

"Oh! there will be enough to keep them off, I think," Young Wild West's sweetheart answered. "The worst thing now is that Wild isn't here."

"He'll be with us afore long, an' don't make no mistake on that," Charlie assured her.

As they finally rode into the settlement they were greeted warmly by about half a dozen men and a score or more of women and children.

It did not take long to explain matters to them, and then there was much excitement.

No one had dreamed that hostile Indians were so close, which showed that old Crow Foot had played his cards well, indeed.

Jim Dart quickly found that there were only about seventeen men in Bud Creek just then.

Nearly all those who made their living by hunting and trapping were away.

The boy looked over the ground and came to the conclusion that two log cabins which were in about the centre of the little settlement were about the best place for the women and children to gather in case there was an attack.

There were other log cabins around, but no two were as close together as these.

He did not say anything just then, only to advise the men to keep a watch for the redskins.

Jim was pretty sure that Crow Foot would not attack the place in the daylight, anyhow.

More of the male inhabitants of the place would be home by the time darkness set in, he learned.

After he got a chance he held a consultation with Charlie and Arietta.

As they had seen nothing of Wild, and he should have showed up by this time, if he had managed to get away from the redskins, they were not a little anxious about him.

"I think if he don't come by the time it gets dark we had better go and look for him," said Arietta.

"You kin bet your life on that!" the scout exclaimed. "It are most likely that he had ter stay there, since ther measly coyotes had a chance ter git him while he was there a-holdin' ther chief over his horse. They've got him, but I don't believe they have done nothin' ter him, not yet."

"Well, you and Jim go and see what you can do just as soon as it gets a little dark," the girl said, after they had talked it over a few minutes.

This was agreed upon.

The inhabitants of the settlement had most all heard of Young Wild West and his friends, so there was no wonder that they got a warm welcome there.

The fact that the dashing young hero was a prisoner with the hostile band worried the honest men there, and there was not one of them who was not willing to risk his life in going to try and save him.

But Arietta quickly told them that more could be done by strategy just then than by a sheer force.

If the men were to ride to the woods and make an attack on the camp of the Brules the old chief in command might see to it that the young deadshot was put to death right away.

No one believed that Wild had been killed, but they all felt that he might be if left in the hands of the enemy very long.

Josh Harper was well known at Bud Creek, and he talked with the men belonging there very earnestly, the cowboys listening and putting in a word occasionally.

Having seen to the horses and supplies they had with them, Hop and Wing, the two Chinamen, had nothing to do, so they wended their way to the little store, which was kept by a man from Vermont, so he said.

This they found out right away, and they also took him to be a very shrewd man.

Hop did, anyway, for he was one who took notice of things.

Wing did not care much what kind of a man the storekeeper was.

The Celestials appeared to amuse the man considerably, and when he had asked them a lot of questions about Young Wild West and his friends he began to grow a little personal.

"What made you fellers leave China?" he queried, grinning and looking sharp at them.

"Um big ship sail from Hong Kong and allee samee

fetchee us," Hop answered, while his brother nodded and smiled, as though that was the reason, as a matter of course.

"Putty smart, ain't yer?" and the storekeeper snapped his eyes.

"Velly muchee smartee, so be," Hop admitted, as though he did not care much to let it be known.

"Say, Jeddy," spoke up a loungee, "I reckon there ain't nothin' slow about one of them, is there?"

"Putty fresh, fur a Chinee, I calculate," was the reply.

"Allee samee velly muchee flesh," Hop added, while Wing passed on and went over to the blacksmith shop, where the cowboys had gathered.

"Huh!" said the storekeeper. "I calculate that you're more than smart, Mister Chinee. What are yer grinnin' about, I'd like ter know?"

"Me no glin; me allee samee laughee, so be."

Then Hop did laugh, and so loudly that the cowboys at once started for the store to find out what was going on.

Wing was called just then by Jim Dart, so he wended his way over to where the party had made its temporary headquarters.

Hop walked on into the store, followed by the crowd that had gathered.

The storekeeper snapped his eyes.

"Do yer want ter buy somethin'?" he asked.

"Yes, me likee buy sometling," was the reply.

"What do yer want?"

The man acted as though he doubted it, but when the Celestial drew a handful of gold coins from his pocket a smile lit up his face.

"Me likee buy um nicee clay pipe, so be."

At this the cowboys and two or three others that had been hanging around the store, broke into a laugh.

The storekeeper was anxious to get the nickel for a pipe, however, though he had expected to fill a much larger order when he saw all the money.

He put out half a dozen clay pipes for Hop to select from.

One was soon picked out, and then the money was paid.

If the storekeeper had been as sharp as he thought he was he would have noticed that two pipes were missing from those he took out of the box when he put them back.

Hop had slipped one up his sleeve right before the eyes of all hands, and no one knew it.

He looked the pipe he had in his hand over carefully and then let it drop upon the floor.

Of course it broke in pieces, but he did not seem to be much disturbed over it.

"Me velly soonee fixee," he declared, as he knelt down and picked up the pieces.

"You'll do what?" the storekeeper cried.

"Me allee samee fixee," was the reply.

"I'd like ter see yer do it. Why, ther pipe is broke in about a dozen pieces."

"Lat allee light. You allee samee waitee."

Hop laid the pieces on the counter and proceeded to fit them together.

He took no pains to put the pieces where they belonged, and there was much laughing.

Suddenly he threw his big handkerchief over them, and then holding his hand up in a mysterious way, said:

"Me blow on um handkelchief and len um pipe be allee samee fixee pletty quickee."

He gave a quick blow and pulled aside the handkerchief.

There was a pipe on the counter that was as whole and sound as the day it was made.

The clever Chinaman placed it in his mouth and then walked outside, leaving the cowboys grinning broadly and the rest staring after him in blank amazement.

CHAPTER IX.

WILD MAKES HIS ESCAPE.

Wild was quite willing to risk a fight with hunting knives with any of the Indians.

He knew about all the tricks that went with such a duel, and he depended on his agility and coolness to best him.

Little Buck stepped out, acting as though he did not quite feel as though he was going to have it all his own way.

His friends applauded him, however, and this made him put on a confident air.

"Little Buck will not kill the paleface boy; he will cut off his ears and give them to Crow Foot," said the chief.

"And I'll cut off Little Buck's nose and give it to you," Wild answered in his cool and easy way.

The chief nodded, as though he was well satisfied with the arrangement.

It mattered little to Wild whether or not the redskin meant to kill him, but since he heard Crow Foot say that he was not to be killed, he did not intend to slay the Indian.

But he really meant to slice off a bit of his nose.

One of the braves handed the boy his own hunting knife, and then he felt like getting right into the fight.

But he had already picked out the way he wanted to go when he made the break for liberty, and that was as much in his mind just then as was the fight.

It was now so dark that the only light they had came from the fire the redskins had cooked their supper with.

They had not given Wild a morsel to eat, but he felt that he could wait a little longer for his supper.

Clutching the knife firmly, he faced his foe.

Little Buck showed signs of uneasiness, and noticing it, some of the young bucks in the band commented audibly about it.

This angered him somewhat, and without waiting for the old chief to give the word, he darted at Wild and made a slash to sever one of his ears.

But the boy was watching him and he cleverly parried the blow.

Then he started in to make several lightning-like moves and quickly had his opponent bewildered.

Little Buck danced around on the defensive, unable to understand it all.

Wild knew he had him, so he decided to make good his promise and end it in a hurry.

He made a slash, measuring the distance carefully, and clipped off the end of the Indian's nose.

It was not much of a piece, but he had kept his word, however.

Little Buck uttered a savage cry and started at him, regardless of putting up any guard.

Wild struck the knife from his hand, and then using the open palm of his left hand, he struck him on the side of the head and sent him to the ground.

Then the young deadshot made a start and broke through the human ring.

Wild ran like a deer through the woods, and before the Indians fairly realized what had happened he was lost to view in the darkness.

The boy knew the way to go, and lightly he ran along until he came out of the woods on the side opposite to that which the settlement was located upon.

He knew the redskins would think he had gone the other way, and hence he chose this direction.

Once outside the woods the boy had plain sailing, and he ran swiftly.

Wild was a good runner, even though he was in the saddle the most of his time when he was traveling.

He never once stopped until a mile had been covered.

No yells came from the Brules after the first shout of surprise, and he knew this was because they did not want to let him know where they were.

After a short walk, during which he listened intently, the young deadshot started running again.

But he took up a gait this time that he could keep up for a long distance, and when he thought he must be somewhere near the settlement he set out through the timber strip.

In about two minutes the lights in the houses at the settlement were before him.

They were a little to his left, showing that he had gone a trifle too far.

But this was all the better, for he hardly thought the redskins would pursue him right to the place, unless they were ready to make the attack on the settlers.

Crossing the creek, he hurried around and soon reached a log cabin.

There was no one there, so he went on.

"Who's there?" came the sharp call of a man on guard.

"Young Wild West," was the answer.

"What?"

"That's right. I managed to get here after a while. Where are my friends?"

"Over there to ther centre," was the reply.

"I'll get right there, then."

Wild found that it was one of the settlers who was doing guard duty at the end of the place.

He allowed the man to look him over and then he hurried to join his companions.

The next minute he was met by the girls.

"Oh!" exclaimed Arietta. "Did you meet Charlie and Jim Wild?"

"Why, no," he answered. "Did they go to look for me?"

"Yes, about ten minutes ago."

"Great Scott! that's bad work. Maybe they have run right into the redskins and got caught. It is too bad I couldn't have got away a little sooner."

Wild found that things were in good shape there.

A few of the settlers had returned just before his arrival, and they had helped the others to put up a barricade between the two log cabins that had been selected for the women and children to take refuge in.

It was here that Wild had met Arietta and the others.

He quickly related how he had escaped from the band of redskins, and then he grew anxious to find out where Charlie and Jim were.

"I reckon I'll have to go and look for them," he said. "As like as not they have got caught by the redskins, for they certainly came up this way, thinking they were on my trail."

It was just then that one of the settlers came forward and announced that a sorrel stallion had been found near the rest of the horses.

"Good!" exclaimed Wild. "I had almost forgotten about Spitfire. He lit out like a streak after stumbling over the log and throwing me. He has got as much sense in that way as a human being has. He knew well that he could not help me, so he got away. I'll go and see him."

He found it was Spitfire, sure enough.

Where the intelligent steed had been all the time he did not know, but after a while he had found the horses he was used to traveling with, which showed the wonderful instinct he possessed.

Wild asked for Hop, who had just returned from the store, where he had been entertaining the proprietor with his sleight-of-hand, and bade him to see to the sorrel right away.

The boy learned that Charlie and Jim had gone on foot, so he struck out in the same way, just as soon as he armed himself and ate something.

He was now pretty well satisfied that his partners had been caught by the redskins, though there was a possibility that they were steering clear of them.

They had been gone fully half an hour when he set out through the darkness.

Wild had not covered more than a hundred yards when he heard footsteps behind him.

Someone was trying to overtake him, so he stopped and waited to find out who it was.

"Misler Wild, me allee samee likee go 'long, so be," a voice said in a low tone.

It was Hop.

"All right, Hop; come right along," our hero answered. "I reckon you might come in handy. Did you fix Spitfire all right?"

"Velly muchee light, Misler Wild. Me knowee how to fixee Spitfire. He allee samee knowee me, and he likee me lub um down."

"Yes, I reckon he does know you by this time. But just keep quiet now. We have got to be mighty careful, for there is no telling but that some of the redskins are mighty close by."

"Allee light, Misler Wild," Hop whispered.

The two now struck out in the direction of the Indian camp.

There was no moon, though the stars were shining brightly, and they could see a safe distance ahead.

Wild figured on it taking about half an hour to reach the Indian camp, and keeping both eyes and ears open, he led the way.

When he came to think over it he made up his mind that Charlie and Jim might not have been caught, after all.

It was probable that if they had not that they were spying on the redskins in an effort to find out something about him.

There was only one safe way to proceed, and that was to keep along in the shadow of the woods, so gradually our hero led the way there.

Without making a noise that could be heard more than a dozen yards ahead of them, the two walked along.

Hop had learned to be cautious, and that was one reason why our hero was willing that he should accompany him.

They went on without meeting anything in the line of a human being and at length the campfire of the redskins came in sight.

CHAPTER X.

EXCITEMENT AT THE INDIAN CAMP.

Charlie and Jim had no idea that Wild was going to escape without assistance, or they would not have started out.

It was only natural that they should go, since they were ready to die fighting to save the dashing young deadshot they were so proud to hail as their leader.

The experience they had had with redskins taught them to be very cautious, and they had not covered more than half a mile when they became aware that there were Indians close by.

First they heard the call of a whip-poor-will, which they both knew was not genuine; and then they caught sight of half a dozen forms flitting along the ground about a hundred yards from the dark woods.

"I reckon we've got ter look out, Jim," whispered the scout, as they sank low to the ground. "It sorter strikes me that they've come up this way lookin' fur somethin'."

"It does look that way," Jim answered. "Most likely they've come to spy on the settlement. They ought to know that everyone there must know that they are close by, though. They saw us head that way when we left them."

"Oh! they know that all right. But maybe they want ter find out how many men is there. That's most likely it."

They remained right where they were, and in less than a minute they saw half a dozen forms go sneaking along over the prairie.

This assured them that they had not been seen.

But as they were under the shadows of the trees at the edge of the woods, they could hardly expect that they had been observed.

Signals were freely exchanged by the redskins for the next ten minutes, and then they got together in a bunch, and after a short consultation, headed for the camp.

This was the cue for Charlie and Jim to follow them, and they lost no time about it.

The redskins were not particular as to making a noise as they walked along, so this gave our two friends all the better chance to keep close to them.

It seemed to be a rather long time to Charlie and Jim, but after a while the camp was reached.

The redskins walked into it, while they crept around into the woods to spy upon it and look for Wild.

When they got close enough to answer their purpose they soon became convinced that the boy was not there.

There was no tepee or anything in that line that he could be hidden in, and that meant that he had either been disposed of by his captors, or had made his escape.

Charlie and Jim were inclined to believe that it was the latter, since they knew enough of the habits of the redskins to make them think that they did not kill a prisoner right away after taking him.

They were on the warpath, it was true, but all their fiendish instincts were aroused, and they would naturally go back to the traditions of their forefathers and torture their prisoners before killing them.

There was only one way to find out exactly and that was to try and catch something of what was being talked about at the camp.

Leaving Jim crouching behind two trees that grew up from the same stump, the scout worked his way up close to the band.

Then he was not long in learning that Wild had made a dash from the camp, and that he had succeeded in throwing the redskins off his track.

Charlie was elated at hearing this.

But he felt that he ought to learn what they proposed to do in regard to attacking the settlement before he left, so he settled down and listened.

Somehow the Brules did not seem disposed to talk about that matter.

After waiting a good ten minutes the scout crept back to Dart.

"Wild got away," he said in a whisper.

"Good!" was the reply. "I feel better now, Charlie."

"So do I. I reckon he must have fooled 'em putty good, by ther way they're talkin'."

"Well, we had better go back, then, I reckon."

"Yes, that's right. Come ahead."

They made their way cautiously from the spot for a couple of minutes, and then feeling safe, struck out over the plain for the settlement.

When they got back, and found that Wild and Hop had gone to look for them, they were both surprised.

"Back we go, Jim," said Charlie. "This time we'll take our horses. I don't much like walkin' there an' back ag'in."

"One of you will be enough to go, I think," spoke up Arietta. "I have no doubt that they will come back as soon as they find that you are not there, anyhow."

"I want ter make sure about that," the scout said, shaking his head in a dogged way. "Wild went after us, an' we'll go after him."

"But you went after him first, so you're even on that."

"It don't make no difference; we'll go, won't we, Jim?"

"Yes," retorted Dart. "We might be needed. If we meet them coming back we can take them on our horses."

The two soon mounted their horses and set out.

They rode along in the shadow of the woods until they were within a quarter of a mile of the camp, and then they slackened the speed to a walk.

Both knew that it was dangerous to proceed close to the camp on horseback, so when they had gone as far as they thought it advisable, they dismounted, and leaving their horses with the bridle reins hanging over their heads, so they would not stray from the spot, they proceeded as they had done before.

They had passed our hero without knowing it when they returned to the settlement, and now they were back again.

When they were within perhaps a hundred yards of the camp a shrill yell of alarm suddenly came to their ears.

"Hip hi! Me allee samee goodee Chinee! Stoppee!" rang out clear and distinct.

"Ther redskins have got Hop!" exclaimed the scout. "What's ther matter with ther fool, anyhow?"

"Let's go and find out," suggested Jim.

They both hurried forward in a noiseless manner now.

Nothing more was heard from the Chinaman, which meant that he had either quieted of his own accord, or had been made to by the Indians.

It was just then that they saw the outlines of a form running along the edge of the woods.

As dark as it was, they both recognized who it was.

It was Wild.

Charlie gave the hoot of an owl twice in succession.

He could do it so well that he was not afraid that the redskins would discover that it was an imitation.

The effect was that Wild came toward them, and a few seconds later they met.

"What's ther matter with ther heathen, Wild?" Charlie asked, as soon as they had exchanged whispered greetings.

"Oh! he insisted on playing a trick on the red galoots, and I let him do it," was the reply. "We started to leave the place as soon as we found that you and Jim were not there; but Hop wanted to give them a taste of his fireworks. As he had a slow fuse, and we had time to get a quarter of a mile away before the thing would explode, I let him go ahead. It took some little time to get it ready, and just as he lighted the fuse, and was creeping away to join me, one of the redskin guards stumbled over him. They have got him now, and in about two minutes the fireworks display will take place. I am satisfied that they don't think that there is anyone else about, and they are devoting their whole time to the Chinaman. I was just going to work my way around into the woods to the other side of the camp when I heard your signal."

"Well, we can't go away without Hop, that's certain," spoke up Jim.

"I reckon not," Charlie declared. "Let's git up close by afore them fireworks goes off."

The scout was eager to rescue the Chinaman, though he made out that he did not like him generally.

The three hurried into the woods and swung around to approach the camp from the other side.

The fuse must have been slower than Wild thought, for they managed to get pretty near where they wanted to before anything happened.

Then a loud explosion rang out and the Indian camp was filled with flying sparks of many colors, while a hissing sound like that of escaping steam, came to their ears.

The three dashed straight into the camp now.

They knew that Hop must be bound, and bent on getting him away from his captors, they took a great risk.

The flying sparks illumined the scene for a good distance around, and when they saw the Chinaman tied to a tree they all bounded forward.

The Brules, startled by the extraordinary display, had fled from the camp, and before the hissing and flying sparks had ceased Hop was cut free and dragged into the bushes.

"Come on!" said the scout. "Our horses is close by."

They ran swiftly for the place where the horses had been left, and reaching them, mounted.

The next minute the two steeds, with their double loads were galloping for the settlement.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIGHT ON THE PLAINS BEGINS.

The Chinaman's trick had won. The Indians had been fooled once more and Young Wild West and his companions got safely back to the settlement.

The girls were very anxious about them, and when they found that they all came back together there was a general rejoicing.

With Young Wild West with them the settlers felt easier, and they were ready to do as he told them.

But the night passed away and the redskins did not make the attack.

"They're tryin' ter make us think that they've give it up, I reckon," said Cheyenne Charlie. "But that thing won't work. If they don't come here putty soon, I guess we'll have ter go there."

"It looks that way, Charlie," our hero nodded.

It was just before sunrise. The two were standing on a little knoll in the settlement, looking in the direction of the spot where the hostile Brules camped.

In a minute or two they were joined by some of the settlers, who had feared that they would be attacked just before daylight, and who had slept but little in consequence.

"What are yer goin' ter do about ther Injuns, Young Wild West?" one of them asked. "I wish this here thing was over. I've got my traps ter 'tend ter, so I kin git ther bread an' butter what ther children eats. Of course I wouldn't go away as long as I thought there was ther

least danger ter 'em, an' you kin bet that I'll spill my last drop of blood fightin' fur 'em!"

"That's the way to talk," Wild retorted. "Well, if the redskins don't come to us we'll have to go to them. I am like you, I don't believe in staying in suspense. I reckon we can rake up about twenty-five, all told, and go out and rout the redskins. We might be able to take them by surprise in the woods, and then it would be pretty easy."

"How many of 'em did yer say they was?" one of the others asked.

"Oh! seventy-five or eighty."

The questioner shook his head.

"A little too many of 'em, I think," he said: "Not that we couldn't whip 'em in ther end, but some of us would have ter go under, an' that means there'd be wid-ders an' orphans here in Bud Creek."

Wild understood the feelings of the men pretty well.

He did not mean to rush them into any danger without it was necessary.

"Get your breakfast," he said to them. "Then we'll try and find out what is best to be done."

As our friends had not told them how close the detachment of cavalry was, the settlers of course knew nothing about Lieutenant Lacy and his men.

But they wanted to win without the aid of them, if they could, for all were agreed that Lieutenant Lacy had acted the part of a jealous child.

Josh Harper and the cowboys were dead against him though they declared that they liked the cavalymen under him all right.

The old plainsman was one of the really plucky kind.

"Wild," said he, "I reckon we had better go out an' git ther Injuns in a skirmish. Stirrin' 'em up will be about ther proper thing jest now."

"I rather think you are right, Josh," was the reply. "If the boys are willing we will take a ride out on the prairie and try it at long range."

"Oh! they're willin' enough. Yer kin bet on that!"

As soon as they had eaten breakfast the cowboys began saddling their horses.

The men belonging to the settlement looked at them in surprise.

"Where are yer goin'?" one asked.

"Goin' out lookin' up Injuns," Josh Harper answered.

"Jest you fellers?"

"Yes, ain't that enough? Young Wild West is goin' ter lead us, an' he's as good as any ten men yer ever seen."

"Maybe some of us had better go along with yer."

The man, who was a trapper, seemed willing to help all he could.

But Wild knew that they would a great deal rather stay right there and defend their families, so he did not let any of the settlers accompany them.

With his two partners, Josh Harper and the four cowboys, he set out to try and draw the Indians into a skirmish.

Wild decided to go through the woods and approach the camp from the other side, so it was not long before they were lost to the view of those in the little village.

Hop Wah wanted to go with them, but Wild had or-

dered him to remain right there and look out for the girls, in case he was needed.

Somehow a peculiar feeling came over our hero after he reached the timber with his companions.

He could not help thinking that something was wrong. But there was certainly nothing wrong with the party.

The men were eager to get at the redskins and whip them.

"Boys," said the young deadshot, "I wouldn't be surprised if we had a lively time of this before it is over."

"I reckon we ought ter handle seventy-five or eighty redskins, Wild," the scout answered.

"That's right enough, too. But suppose more of them come?"

"That's so. I never thought of that."

"It has just struck me that old Crow Foot might be waiting for more redskins to come, otherwise he would surely have attacked the settlement last night."

"That's right," said Dart, shaking his head. "I could see that you was thinking seriously about something. Is that what it was, Wild?"

"Yes, a feeling came over me a little while ago that something was wrong. I reckon that is what it was. I had it in my head that the redskins were going to be reinforced, but it had not come out yet. I feel better now."

The strip of timber was right across a rolling plain, and it not being over a mile in width, our friends soon reached the other side.

The sun being up, it was a glorious sight to look over the long stretch of short green grass.

But there was nothing in sight for our friends just then.

They had other business on hand.

As Young Wild West called a halt and placed his hand over his eyes to shade them from the sun, he saw something in the distance that caused a feeling of uneasiness to come over him.

Horsemen were approaching, if he knew what he saw, and a lot of them, too!

"Do you see anything, boys?" he asked, turning to his companions, who were all looking in the same direction as he had been.

"I reckon so," the scout answered. "About fifty Injuns, if I know anything about it."

"As sure as you live, Charlie!" Dart exclaimed.

The others saw the horsemen, too, and it had not taken them more than a couple of minutes to agree that they were Indians.

There were just about fifty of them, as near as they could judge, and they were evidently following the trail of Crow Foot's band.

With fifty armed redskins added to the band, the old chief would surely make short work of the settlers.

Our hero now understood why Crow Foot had not made the attack during the night.

He must have expected the others to come and join him.

"Well, what are yer goin' ter do, Wild?" Cheyenne Charlie asked, shrugging his shoulders and showing that he was just a bit uneasy.

"I reckon we'll have to ride out and meet this gang," was the reply. "We mustn't let them join the others."

If they do there will be the hardest kind of fight ahead of us. Even if Lacy comes along with his men it won't be an easy thing. I wonder where the fool is keeping himself, anyhow? If he waits for me to send word for him to come he will stay there forever."

"That's right, Wild," nodded Jim. "He knows what he should do, and since he has questioned your right to advise him, and you have parted company, let him do as he pleases about it. I reckon we can drive off the redskins that are coming this way, if we find out that they are on the warpath, and mean to join old Crow Foot's band."

"There's only eight of us, but if we can't do it no twenty men kin!" the scout declared.

"Come on, then," said our hero. "We'll ride out and meet them. I reckon it won't take long to find out what they are up to."

That settled it.

They all left the woods and rode at a swinging lope to meet the band of redskins that was approaching in the distance.

The sun shining in their faces caused our friends to be unable to see as far as they otherwise might have done, and this made the redskins much nearer to them.

The fact was they were not more than five miles away when they set out to meet them.

By the time five minutes had passed they were close enough to observe the movements and actions of the band.

It was evident that the redskins did not know exactly what to do.

But as they kept on riding toward them the band suddenly spread out in the shape of a fan and came galloping toward them.

"That means fight," said Wild, coolly. "Now, boys, get ready for business. Don't let any of them get too close to you. The majority of them have rifles, and there might be some very good shots among them."

Not until they were within half a mile of each other did the Indians begin firing.

And the moment they did Young Wild West gave the word to answer the fire, and not to waste any lead.

The four cowboys had no rifles, but the rest had, and for the next two or three minutes the air was rent by the sharp cracking.

The redskins fell right and left, showing how well our hero and his partners could shoot.

CHAPTER XII.

HOP AGAIN FOOLS THE STOREKEEPER.

Our friends had pitched their tents right near the spot that had been fortified against an attack from the Indians.

After Wild and his partners had set out with Harper and the cowboys it occurred to Arietta that in case the

Indians did make the attack the store would be their objective point.

"I think we had better purchase what provisions we need right now," she said to Anna and Eloise. "Maybe we will be fixed so we can't get what we want by and by."

"That is right," the scout's wife answered. "We have money enough to buy what is needed, I think."

"Oh, yes."

Arietta called Wing, and he soon told just what was needed to replenish their stores.

The girl made items of them on a piece of paper, and then calling Hop, gave him the necessary money and told him to go to the store and make the purchase.

The Chinaman was only too glad to go to the store, for he had not been there since he astonished the proprietor with his sleight-of-hand work.

"Allee light, Missy Alietta," he said, smiling and bowing, as he took the money and slip of paper, "me gittee um tlings allee samee velly muchee quickee, so be."

"Well, there is no particular hurry," she answered.

Hop went on over to the store.

Half a dozen men were loitering about the stoop, each with a rifle.

Knowing that there was a band of redskins close by, waiting to get a chance to raid the settlement, they would not go about unarmed.

They had either seen Hop's tricks of the night before, or had heard about them, and when he bade them a smiling "good morning!" they were not a little interested.

The first thing the Chinaman did was to go in and give his order to Jeddy Brown, the storekeeper.

The Yankee treated him differently from the way he had the first time he saw him.

He had been taught that when the Chinaman said he was "velly muchee smartee" that such was indeed the fact.

Jeddy had heretofore been of the opinion that he was about the smartest man that ever came West.

But here was a Chinaman, who was away ahead of him.

"How you feel lis morning?" Hop asked, pleasantly.

"Not very good," was the reply. "I don't believe I got a wink of sleep last night. I was layin' awake, expectin' every minute ter hear ther alarm that ther redskins was comin'. How did you sleep, Mister Hop?"

"Me sleepee allee samee likee um top, so be. Me no 'flaid of um ledskins. Me gittee catehee last night, and um ledskins tie me to um tlee. Len um fireworks allee samee go off and Young Wild West and him partners lun in um camp and cuttee me loosee. We comee away likee Sammy Hill, so be!"

"Yes, I heard somethin' about that. They say as how you kin make your own fireworks. Is that so?"

"Me makee lillee fireworks, so be."

"An' yer seared ther Injuns with 'um last night, eh?"

"Makee allee samee velly muchee scare, so be."

"Ther dickens, you say!"

"You wantee see lillee fireworks?" Hop asked, innocently.

"Yes, if yer don't mind."

Hop produced a little vial containing some brownish powder and dumped a little on the counter.

Then from another vial he emptied some gray powder.

The two tiny piles were about three inches apart, and they looked very innocent.

But they were both chemicals and all that was needed was a little water to make the storekeeper see fireworks, and hear them, too."

"Me likee havee lillee dlop of water," said the Chinaman.

"Yes, but how about ther fireworks?" queried the man.

"Me showee light away."

"But that's some kind of medicine powders what you've got there, ain't it?"

"You givee me lillee water, so be."

The storekeeper handed him a glass containing water.

In taking it from him Hop caused some of the water to spill and run along the counter.

The moment it touched the two powders there was a vivid flash, followed by a report that was as loud as that made by a charge of powder being shot from a gun.

The store was filled with smoke, too, and those who had been looking on made a break for the door.

A clever trick had been played upon the Yankee again, but he did not fully realize it just then.

When the flame flared up he had jumped back to get out of the way and had set himself in a basket of eggs.

By the time he got up the store was empty, and groping his way through the smoke, he came outside.

Hop stood explaining to the settlers how the explosion took place, and when he saw his victim he said:

"You likee um fireworks, so be?"

"Great haymows! No! I don't want ter see any more of your fireworks, you blamed heathen!" was the reply.

"Allee light. You allee samee askee me, and me showee you."

"But I didn't want ter see nothin' go off in my store, you fool!"

"Lat velly stlange. How you see um fireworks if um no allee samee go off?"

Hop looked at him as though he was puzzled.

The men standing around laughed at this.

"No use talkin', Jeddy, yer can't git ther best of him," said one.

"Who's tryin' ter git ther best of him?" snapped the storekeeper. "It don't say that he's got a right ter blow up my store, though."

"Me no blowee uppee um store, so be; me only makee lillee smoke," the Chinaman answered, innocently.

Jeddy turned and went into the store, the rest following, including Hop.

The smoke was about all gone by this time, and but for a couple of small burned spots on the counter no one would ever have thought such a loud explosion had occurred there but a few minutes before.

The storekeeper soon got himself together and began putting up Hop's order.

While he was thus engaged Hop pulled a fine gold watch from somewhere on his person and looked to see what time it was.

Jeddy leaned over and took a look at the timepiece.

"What's she worth?" he asked, he knowing very well it was worth more than a hundred dollars, for he knew something of jewelry and watches.

"Me no knowee," the Chinaman answered, shaking his

head. "Me play lillee gamee dlaw pokee one night with um card sharp, and when he losee allee his money he allow samee bettee um watch. Me win um watchee, so be."

"How will yer trade?" and Jeddy produced an old-fashioned bulls-eye silver watch from his vest pocket and held it out.

"Allee light; me no care for um gold watchee; me losee velly quickee, maybe."

Hop unhooked the chain that was to the watch and then handed it to the storekeeper, at the same time taking his.

"Velly goodee tlade," he said, with a smile.

"If you're satisfied I am," retorted Jeddy, acting as though he could hardly believe the evidence of his own senses.

But the next moment his face changed.

The watch Hop had given him did not appear to be quite so bright as it looked when he held it in his hand.

Jeddy opened the case.

Then he let out a howl of dismay.

It was nothing but an empty brass case that he had!

"You cheated me!" he declared, shaking his fist at the Chinaman. "Give me back my watch."

"You allee samee muchee squeal," the clever Chinaman answered. "Me leavee to um men here if me no makee square tlade."

"Yer sartinly did," one of them hastened to say.

"No, he didn't," cried Jeddy, angrily. "This ain't ther watch he was lookin' at."

"It sartinly wasn't no other one," declared another of the spectators. "I was lookin' at ther watch ther whole time, an' it never went out of my sight."

"But this ain't no watch; it's only an old brass case of one."

Hop was looking at the watch he had taken from the storekeeper.

Suddenly he placed it in his handkerchief, and twisting it into the form of a sling-shot, brought the watch upon the counter with a bang that fairly jarred it.

"Lat makee um watchee go pletty goodee," he said, while the lookers-on stared at him in amazement.

Jeddy turned white.

No doubt he felt that he was going to be without any kind of a watch now, for that crack must surely have broken the bulls-eye.

Before he could say anything Hop gave it another bang.

Then he opened the handkerchief, felt in it and handed the storekeeper his watch without a blemish upon it.

"Sendee um tlings over to um camp," he said, and then he walked out, leaving all hands staring after him in amazement.

Hop had scarcely got outside when a man came running hurriedly toward the store.

"Ther Injuns is comin'!" he shouted. "Git ready, boys!"

CHAPTER XIII.

ARIETTA GOES TO LOOK FOR HELP.

Hop ran swiftly for the camp.

But the girls knew what was the matter before he told them, and there was much excitement.

The women and children were hurrying to get into the

two big cañons and the men were getting ready for their well-earned fees.

"It is too bad that Wild is not here," said Arietta. "I don't know how we are going to make out without him."

"Maybe he will be here before long," Anna answered. "It can't be that they went very far away."

"Well, I know what I will do. I will go and find Wild and the rest and bring them here to save the settlement."

"It is too much of a risk, Arietta," declared Eloise, who was the most timid one of the three.

"I can't help that: I must go. Something has got to be done. The red villains are at the edge of the woods, the other side of the creek, and there is no telling what minute they might come dashing into the settlement. I must get Wild here."

There was no dissuading the girl when she once made up her mind to a thing.

She ordered Hop to fetch her horse, and he lost no time in obeying.

With her rifle slung over her shoulder and a brace of revolvers in her belt, the brave girl mounted her steed.

Not until she was leaving did the men of the settlement realize what she was up to.

"Look out what yer do, gal!" one of them called out. "Yer might git catched. Ther varmints ain't more'n a couple of hundred yards from ther last house down there."

She waved her hand for an answer and then rode swiftly away, taking the trail Wild and his companions had followed.

Arietta had hopes of reaching the woods without being seen by the Brules, and when she did get there, and heard nothing from them, she thought she had done so.

Through the timber she rode as fast as she could.

But before she was half way through a yell sounded and half a dozen mounted braves bore down upon her.

There was little chance of escape, for when she turned to go the other way she was met by a dozen more.

Drawing a revolver, she opened fire on those in her way.

Crack! crack!

Two of them fell in a hurry.

But it was no use.

She could not get through, and in a very few seconds she was seized by a brave, who managed to swoop down upon her, and lifted from her horse.

The horse was caught about the same time, so there was no chance for him to go galloping back and let it be known that his young mistress had been captured.

Old Crow Foot had moved up close to the camp but a few minutes before the girl set out on her errand.

It was true that he had expected to be joined by more braves, and even now he had a scout out looking for them.

They were Sioux Indians, who had agreed to meet him near Bad Creek that morning.

The chief did not know just how many of them would come, but he had assurances that there would be quite a number.

Though he had permitted the settlers to see that his braves were close to the settlement, Crow Foot did not mean to make the attack until his Sioux allies arrived.

He knew that the men, who were fighting for all they

held dear, would be desperate, and that meant that many of his braves would go under before the houses could be burned and the women and children butchered.

It was more than pleasing to the villainous old chief to get possession of the pretty white girl.

He had been watching when she left the settlement, and it was he who had directed the arrangements to capture her.

"Paleface maiden heap much smart," he said, as Arietta was led to the spot where the band was quartered, while waiting for their allies. "She go look for help."

"That's right, you old villain," retorted Arietta, boldly. "But don't think that help won't come. It is very close at hand."

"Help come too late. Pretty soon plenty Sioux come to help Brules. Then the palefaces will all die and we will burn the houses and take everything we want. Money, things to eat, paleface women and everything!"

The brave girl paled slightly.

Since she saw nothing of Wild and the rest around this part of the woods, it occurred to her that they might have been attacked by the other band the chief spoke of.

If they had been surprised it was likely that they had either been killed or captured, otherwise they would have shown up before this.

But this question was soon settled, for just then the scout the chief had sent out came in.

He reported that Broken Hoof and fifty Sioux braves were less than four miles away, and that they were having a fight on the plains with Young Wild West and some men.

Young Wild West was holding them off, so they dared not make a dash to join the Brules, so he said; and though there were but eight of the palefaces, they had much the best of the fight, so far, they not having lost a man.

The scout spoke in English, so Arietta heard and understood every word that was said.

The girl was delighted to learn that her lover and his companions were alive.

She had enough confidence in them to believe that they would whip their foes, even if there were fifty of them.

And if the Brules meant to wait until they were joined by the Sioux there was a good chance that the settlement might be saved.

But when she thought of the position she was placed in she grew decidedly uneasy again.

"I must get away," she thought. "I must make a dash for it. There is but one thing to do now, and that is to go and get the cavalymen. Wild would not do this, I know. But I will. I must save the settlement."

While she had been disarmed, the girl had not been bound.

She was right in the midst of the band of savage red men, however, and it looked to be an impossibility to get away from them.

But there was her horse tied to a tree, but a dozen feet from her, and once upon his back she might dash off and elude them, providing if she could do something that would attract their attention in another direction.

She thought for a full minute, and then she decided upon a plan of action.

"Here comes Young Wild West!" she shouted, suddenly; and pulling a knife from the belt of the brave nearest her, she darted forward in a direction that was almost opposite to where her horse was.

But as those before her reached out to catch her she turned and ran for the horse.

The redskins had been fooled, and they were watching for Young Wild West to appear.

This enabled the girl to reach her horse.

One stroke of the knife cut the rope that held the white steed with remarkable ease, and Arietta sprang upon his back.

Off she went through the woods, almost before the Brules knew what she was up to.

Some of them did not know that she had gone, at all, but were expecting to be shot at any moment.

Arietta smiled at her successful ruse.

She knew that she had a chance now, for her horse was a swift one.

She had a good start, too.

But there was bound to be a pursuit, and before she had gone very far she heard the clatter of hoofs.

But the Indians did not utter their savage yells, strange to say.

Arietta knew why this was, however. They did not want to let the settlers know what was going on.

"You have got to be good ones to catch me!" she exclaimed, under her breath. "Unless you shoot my horse you won't do it."

But no shots were fired at her, and finally when she got through the woods, with her nearest pursuer more than a hundred yards behind her, she let her horse out for all he was worth, heading in the direction they had left the cavalry the afternoon before.

Arietta could see the end of the strip of timber away ahead, and knowing that there was the spot where the cavalry was camped, if they had not moved, she rode with the speed of the wind.

Gradually her pursuers were left behind.

The white broncho was a good one, and he was showing just what he could do.

It was only about ten or twelve miles from the settlement to the camp of the cavalymen, and when Arietta had covered three-fourths of the distance she looked back and saw that her nearest pursuer was over a mile behind her.

The girl laughed.

"I guess you want a better horse than that one to catch me!" she exclaimed. "Young Wild West rides the swiftest horse in the world, and he has to have good ones for his friends to ride, or they would never keep up with him."

Ten minutes later Arietta sighted the camp of the cavalymen.

As she dashed up the men sprang to their feet and looked at her eagerly.

"What does this mean?" cried Lieutenant Lacy, as he sprang forward to assist the girl to dismount. "Do you bring orders from Young Wild West?"

"No," replied Arietta, ignoring his offer of assistance

and dismounting. "I am pursued by Indians. Look out for them!"

CHAPTER XIV.

ARIETTA AND THE LIEUTENANT.

The lieutenant looked at Arietta in amazement.

"What!" he cried. "Indians pursuing you?"

"Yes, but only a few. They are over a mile away. It might be a good idea to send three or four of your men to give them what they deserve."

"I am under the orders of Young Wild West," was the reply. "I shall have to wait until I hear from him before I move from here."

"Oh! is that so?"

The girl's eyes flashed.

"Yes, Miss, that is so. I have the order from the colonel to that effect."

"Don't talk to me like that, you miserable coward!"

The lieutenant's face colored, and he started back, involuntarily laying his hand on the hilt of his sword.

"That's right. You would almost strike a woman, I believe!" cried the girl, her eyes flashing more than ever. "You say you can't do anything unless it is the order of Young Wild West. Why did you try to ignore him, and cause him to quit your company? You are a lieutenant now, but I promise you that you will be reduced to nothing when we get back to the fort. Now then, I tell you to send two or three men to meet the Indians who pursued me. Do you hear what I say? It is not Young Wild West who is giving the order, but I am his sweetheart, and I think I have something to say!"

The officer turned from her and promptly ordered five of the detachment to mount and ride back to meet the Indians.

The cavalymen were more than glad to do this, for since they had remained idly in the camp they had all come to the conclusion that the officer had made a fool of himself, and that Young Wild West had been strictly in the right in all he had said and done.

It was not long before the cracking of rifles sounded, and a little later the five cavalymen came galloping back.

"There were three of them, and we got them all," was the report.

"They shot at us first, Lieutenant."

"Very well," was the reply.

Arietta had remained silent during this time, but she now stepped up to Lacy and said:

"The settlement of Bud Creek is likely to be attacked at any time, sir. About seventy Brules are in the woods within a hundred yards of the outskirts, and there are very few men there to defend it. Out on the prairie Young Wild West and seven others are fighting a band of fifty Sioux. I don't want you to go and help Young Wild West, but I do want you to help me save the settlement."

"That is what we started from the fort to do, miss."

But it was all left in the hands of Young Wild West. I am to obey his orders, and if he is not here to give them it is not my fault."

Lacy was certainly going crazy, his men thought.

He was so jealous at having a boy put over him that he could not restrain his true feelings.

But he had one to deal with now, who was neither a man or a boy.

She was nothing but a young girl, but she was the sort who always make it a point to have their own way in matters.

Arietta had no fear of the consequences, so she turned to the men and exclaimed:

"Come with me and save the settlement. The lives of helpless children depend on you. If your commanding officer has gone crazy it does not say that you must let innocent children be slaughtered. Come with me! If Lieutenant Lacy attempts to interfere I will shoot him dead in his tracks!"

She took the big cavalry pistol that hung at the side of the cavalryman nearest to her as she spoke and pointed it at Lacy's heart.

It was a startling tableau.

Lacy never forgot the look in the girl's eye as long as he lived.

But he came to his senses just then, and turning to his men, cried out:

"I am wrong, boys! Do as the girl says. I have made a fool of myself, and I am not ashamed to own it before you all."

"Ah!" exclaimed Arietta. "That sounds better, I must say."

The brave girl had won, and she was satisfied.

But her feelings toward the officer had not changed any, however.

She meant to tell him something after the trouble was over.

Seeing that her horse was rested somewhat, she went to him to mount.

The command came from the lieutenant for the men to mount.

Then he hastened as though to assist the girl.

But she motioned him aside.

"I can get along without any assistance," she said.

The man's face reddened.

"I am keeping right on making a fool of myself, I see," he said.

Arietta made no reply.

But she certainly thought he was right in what he said.

In a very few minutes the detachment was on the way to the settlement, Arietta riding well toward the rear, and out of the way of the lieutenant.

When they were about half the distance to the place a horseman was seen approaching from away off to the left.

Arietta was not long in recognizing who it was.

It was Hop Wah.

"I suppose he has thought about getting the cavalry to come," she thought; "and fearing that I would not be able to reach them, he has started out, taking a route that would keep him out of sight of the Indians. Hop is a

brave fellow, if he is a Chinaman. He knows just what to do in critical times, which is something a whole lot of others don't know."

The horseman rapidly neared them, the cavalymen watching him with no little interest.

It had been discovered that he was a Chinaman, and they all knew that he must be one of the two belonging to Young Wild West's party.

"I guess it must be the smart one that won our money with the trick dice," said one of the cavalymen, who had been in the game.

"Yes, that's who it is. I s'pose he's comin' for help," said another.

"Most likely."

A mile further on the Chinaman joined them.

It was Hop, of course. Wing would never do anything like that, as he did not know enough.

Hop had worried a whole lot after Arietta left the settlement, and fearing that she might not succeed, he mounted his horse and went by a round-about way, so as to escape being seen by the redskins, to hunt for the cavalry.

When he came in sight of them the Chinaman was more than pleased, as might be supposed.

But when he found that Arietta was with them he could scarcely contain himself.

Arietta did not hesitate to tell him all that had happened, for she thought as much of Hop as if he had been an American.

She knew how true he was to Young Wild West and his friends, and that was why she took him into her confidence.

She did not hesitate to tell him how the lieutenant had acted, and as that officer happened to be listening, he took exception to it.

"You have no right to belittle me to a mere Chinaman, miss," he said, speaking in a respectful way, but showing how angry he was, nevertheless.

"I have a right to talk to whom I please," the girl retorted, and the flash was in her eyes again.

"Very well; I shall say no more."

"Please, don't."

It was evident that Arietta had learned to despise the lieutenant.

But she certainly could not be blamed.

The man was either crazy, or a rascal.

There was no other way to look at it.

Hop had sense enough to keep silent, as far as speaking about the lieutenant was concerned, so they rode on, he telling Arietta that the Indians were still near the settlement, but that they had not attacked it when he left.

"They won't do that unless they are joined by the band that Wild is fighting," she assured him. "I heard what their plans were when they had me in their power."

"Ley havee you, but ley no keepee you, allee samee me lastee nightee, Missy Alietta," he said. "Misler Wild and Misler Charlie and Misler Jim allee samee gittee me after um fireworks go off. But you allee samee gittee way with nobody to helpee you, so be."

"Yes, I did it myself, Hop. I had to do something,

so I tried the best thing I knew. I thought if I made out that Wild was coming the Indians would get scared and look that way, and it worked to a charm."

"Velly goodee, me tink, Missy Arietta."

It was just then that the cracking of firearms sounded.

"The attack has begun!" exclaimed Arietta. "Faster, men!"

The cavalymen, ignoring the lieutenant entirely, rode after the girl and the Chinaman, leaving him in the rear.

As they neared the collection of log cabins and shanties they saw one of those nearest the woods burst into flames.

"They are at it!" exclaimed one of the cavalymen. "Hurry up, boys!"

The shooting was something fierce now, and the smoke soon shut out all view of the houses.

But with Arietta in the lead the cavalry approached at a rapid pace.

Surely the girl was going to save the settlement.

Crang! crang!

Crack, crack, crack! Cra-c-ek!

The reports of the firearms were almost deafening now, showing that the brave settlers were fighting at their best.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW WILD AND HIS FRIENDS BEAT THE INDIANS.

Young Wild West knew that in order to get the best of the band of Sioux they must keep them at a distance, and then pick them off gradually.

There happened to be a hollow spot on the plain, and toward this our hero and his companions galloped.

"Boys, if we can make them think that they have got us where they want us they will keep riding around in circles and wasting their ammunition. Jingo! If there isn't a couple of big rocks there! Just the place, boys!"

The hollow was soon reached.

They quickly dismounted.

"Down with the horses!" cried Wild. "We must not expose them."

His own horse lay down the minute he received the command.

The rest were finally induced to do so, and then they were ready to keep the redskins busy for a while.

Already three of them had been shot.

Just as Wild said they would, the Sioux braves began riding around in circles, firing at the hollow as they did so.

The dirt was chipped up all around them, but the bullets failed to reach them.

"Take your time, boys," cautioned Wild, as the old hunter raised his rifle to fire. "Don't miss a shot. The galoots manage to keep on the outside of their horses as they go around, but you can nail one now and then, if you watch sharp."

Crang!

Josh Harper fired just then and one of the Sioux dropped.

Crang!

Cheyenne Charlie tried his luck.

He got his man, too.

Another volley came from the redskins.

But the result was the same.

Our friends kept low down.

Then Wild and Jim both got in an effective shot, and seeing two of their men go down at once, the Indians became enraged enough to make a straight dash for the hollow, hoping, no doubt, to quickly clean out the pale-faces.

But this was where they made a mistake.

Our hero and his companions opened on them and they went down right and left.

They were glad enough to turn and gallop away.

"I reckon that sorter took some of ther starch out of 'em," said the scout, smiling grimly.

"It certainly did," answered Wild. "They'll hold a consultation now and try to think of some other way to get us out of here."

It was fully twenty minutes before the Sioux tried it again, and they met with a worse reception this time.

"I reckon that makes a round dozen less of them," said our hero, as they beat a retreat for the second time. "If they are wise they will give it up and go back to the reservation and surrender themselves to the soldiers."

But they did not leave.

They kept trying it every twenty minutes, until about nearly an hour had passed.

As yet our friends had not been touched by a bullet, which showed what a snug place the hollow was.

They all knew when to expose themselves, and when not to.

The Indians had been very cautious, too, and but two or three more of them had been dropped.

But suddenly out of the woods came the Brules.

"Now, I reckon we'll get it good and hot, boys," said Wild. "Keep cool, everybody, and don't waste any shots."

But when they saw the Sioux ride to meet the braves under old Crow Foot, Wild thought it advisable to get away.

There was no telling what the redskins would do if they made a combined rush for the hollow.

Watching their chance, they made their horses get up, and mounting them, rode away out on the plain.

Wild soon saw that the Sioux were all leaving the place to join the Brules.

The two bands were a couple of miles apart, and the Brules soon came to a halt and waited for their allies to come up.

"I reckon we had better get over to the settlement," said Wild. "They mean to attack it. I am sure, and with that big crowd they will probably do some harm."

They watched them until the two bands met, and then when they saw them all turn and ride slowly to the west our hero proposed that they ride around to the right and try and spy upon their movements.

"That's ther funniest thing I ever seen!" Charlie de-

glared, as they were riding along. "I don't understand why they all don't come fur us an' try ter git us."

"Old Crow Foot is a foxy chief," Wild answered. "He knows that a good many of them would drop before they ever got us, so he thinks it will pay better to tackle the settlement. There will be more in it for him, I suppose."

"If they go ter ridin' right in, shootin' as they go, they'll sartainly make things mighty warm fur them what's there," observed Josh Harper.

"Well, we'll fix it so we get there the same time they do," said Wild. "Then I reckon we'll make them move away. If we open fire on their flank they will soon want to quit."

They rode around for a mile or two and then headed for the woods, where the Indians had just disappeared.

The settlement being so close by, Wild was not afraid to ride up close to the hostiles, so when they got pretty near the spot where they had disappeared he simply slowed down to a walk and listened.

By this time nearly two hours had elapsed since they first set out from Bud Creek.

It was only a mile from them now, and if they heard any shooting they could soon get there.

When he thought they were close enough Wild dismounted.

"Stay right here," he said. "I want to see just where they are."

He moved away, and following the trail the ponies had made, he soon saw the whole lot of the red demons engaged in a pow-wow.

He watched them a few minutes and then turned to go back.

But just then they all arose and made for their horses.

"I've got to get back," thought the boy. "I'll——"

"Ugh!"

A Sioux brave stepped in front of him with a gun leveled straight at him.

"Hello, Redskin," said Wild, quickly recovering himself. "What's the matter with you?"

The boy easily guessed that the fellow was one of the guards, and that he had spied him, and expected to take him a prisoner.

But he did not intend to let him take him a prisoner, just them same.

"Paleface boy hold up hands!" said the Sioux, stepping forward until the muzzle of the gun, which was an old-style muzzle-loader, almost touched the boy's breast.

Wild held up his hands.

But the moment he got them up he brought them down again, and the gun went flying from the Indian's hands.

Wild had done it so quickly that the surprised Sioux had no chance to press the trigger.

If he had done so the bullet would have gone in the air, for Wild was but the fraction of a second in getting the muzzle away from his breast.

Not many would have tried such a thing, for the slightest pressure on the trigger by the redskin would have sent a bullet into his breast.

But Wild had a way of doing things that was quite different from that of the average man or boy.

He took all kinds of chances and relied on his coolness and ability to carry him through.

Spat!

He hit the Indian a blow in the mouth just as he was moving his lips to let out a yell.

Down he went in a heap.

Before he could get up a revolver was pressed against his temple.

"You come with me, and don't you make a sound, either," Wild said, assisting him to his feet. "I reckon you made a mistake in tackling me, didn't you?"

"Young Wild West heap much brave," was the reply in a low tone of voice.

"Oh! you know me, do you?"

"Yes, me know. Young Wild West heap much fight; heap much shoot. Me good Injun; like Young Wild West."

"Well, if you like me you will have no objections to coming with me, then. Come on, Redskin."

The Sioux went along without a protest.

He knew it would be useless, no doubt.

Wild led him to where his companions were awaiting.

"I've got one, boys," he said. "Tie him up, Charlie. We'll take him with us. I reckon we haven't any time to lose, either, for the whole crowd of redskins is getting ready to make a rush into the settlement."

Charlie lost no time in disarming the redskin and binding his wrists together.

Then Jim took him on his horse with him and they rode around to get into Bud Creek.

Just as they were crossing the creek the allied forces burst from the woods, yelling and firing as they came.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

The Indians were ahead of our friends, and before they could get to them one of the shanties was set on fire.

Some of the fiends were there for the sole purpose of kindling fires, while the others did the slaughtering.

As the redskins neared the centre of the little village the firing became terrific and the smoke became so thick that they could hardly be seen.

Young Wild West led the way into the thick of the fray.

"Give it to them, boys!" he shouted. "Make every shot tell!"

When they got behind the barricade they all dismounted.

Then the shooting became stronger than ever.

Wild was looking for old Crow Foot.

He wanted to get him, for without him the redskins would not fight so desperately.

He ran around behind one of the cabins and was just in time to see half a dozen of the villains running up to set fire to the one nearest to it.

Crack! Wild fired and one of them, who had a lighted torch in his hand, dropped.

But just then something unexpected happened.

The prisoner Jim had brought in on his horse had in some unexplained manner liberated himself, and picking

up a heavy bludgeon, which had been dropped by one of the settlers, he rushed up behind the boy and dealt him a blow.

It was lucky for our hero that he moved his head just then, or his brains would have been crushed.

As it was, he was sent to the ground, unconscious from a slanting blow, which grazed the side of his head only.

It was at this moment that the clatter of hoofs sounded and up dashed the cavalymen, Young Wild West's sweetheart in the lead.

As Arietta rode around the cabin in advance of the cavalry she saw Wild lying on the ground apparently dead.

She uttered a scream as one of the redskins raised a club to strike the helpless form on the ground.

It was the same redskin who had felled our hero that Arietta saw with the upraised club.

As the scream rang out he paused and turned around. Crang!

One of the cavalymen sent a bullet from his rifle through the red scoundrel's heart.

The cavalry had not arrived a moment too soon, for the savage horde was making swift headway in their cruel and heartless work.

But with the brave band of Uncle Sam's men there it was different.

No quarter was shown, for the men had no one to lead them now.

The lieutenant was nowhere to be found and Arietta was on her knees beside her unconscious lover.

Wild soon came to.

The firing was not done when he did so, and he tried to jump to his feet.

But Arietta held him down.

"You are hurt, Wild!" she cried. "Take it cool. It is almost over. I found the cavalymen and brought them here to save the settlement."

"I am not hurt, Et," was the reply. "It was only a glancing blow, and just stunned me, that's all. Let me get at them."

The firing ceased just then.

Cheyenne Charlie happened to come along, and seeing Wild sitting on the ground, he said, excitedly:

"What's ther matter, Wild?"

"Nothing much, Charlie," was the reply. "I got knocked down by a club, that's all."

He really was not much hurt, and when he insisted on getting up Arietta permitted him to.

The cavalry had mowed down the redskins like grass before the scythe.

Coming upon them entirely unexpected, they had little chance to get away, though about half of them had succeeded in doing so.

"Where is Lieutenant Lacy?" Wild asked, as soon as he understood the situation.

No one knew.

"We left him behind when we came, Wild," Arietta explained. "I had some words with him, and it was only because I threatened to shoot him that I got him to allow the men to come."

"My horse!" shouted Wild. "Hey, there! Hop, bring Spitfire. I am going to see the finish of this."

By the time Spitfire was brought to him a handkerchief had been tied about his head by his brave little sweetheart.

Mounting, he called out for his partners and the cavalymen to follow him.

Then away he rode after the escaping Indians, who were badly handicapped because they were carrying off some of their wounded with them.

They had not taken to the woods, either, which showed that they must have been badly rattled when they beat the retreat.

The pursuit did not last over fifteen minutes.

Crow Foot was dead, so they gave in easily and threw down their arms.

When they got back to Bud Creek with the prisoners Wild was glad to learn that only one man had been killed and three or four wounded.

"It should not have been as bad as that," he said, shaking his head. "We all did the best we could. But it was Arietta who saved the settlement."

"It sartinly was!" exclaimed one of the old men of the place. "I'd be mighty proud of a sweetheart like that, if I was you, Young Wild West."

"Well, I am," was the reply.

It was just noon when it was all over.

Then the only thing that was puzzling about the whole thing was the disappearance of Lieutenant Lacy.

That he had dropped behind and headed some other way when the cavalry rode into the settlement under the lead of Arietta, was evident.

"Well, he may turn up some time," said our hero. "If he does he might wish he had not, though. I reckon he has sneaked off somewhere to change his uniform for citizen's clothes. He is not fit to wear the clothing of the United States, though. But let it go at that."

The next day they set out for the fort, taking the prisoners with them.

Right here we will state that Lieutenant Lacy was never heard of by anyone in that section, so it must have been that he had deserted the army and made for parts unknown.

And all because he did not want to take orders from Young Wild West.

Many a man would have been proud to take orders from the dashing young deadshot, who was known far and near as the greatest of all the heroes of the Wild West.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST AT 'TWO SPOT' CAMP; or, THE BANDITS AND THE POWDER TRAIN," which will be the next number (319) of "Wild West Weekly."

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SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

The crusade now being waged against rats may have the effect of introducing a new domestic pet into England, the mongoose. To rats, as well as to snakes, the mongoose is a deadly enemy, and its importation into British Borneo some years ago eradicated the plague of rats in that land. The same course was followed when rats became a great pest in the sugar-cane fields of Hawaii, as also in Jamaica, where the mongoose quickly cleared the islands of snakes and rats.

That many of the gulls have become far too numerous during the last fifteen or twenty years, thanks to coddling and over-much protection, has become a patent fact to those who observe and understand the habits of these birds. Here and there measures are being taken to lessen the plague, and by some few county councils the protection once accorded has been withdrawn. Gulls are responsible for an enormous destruction of fish, as well as raids on the eggs and young of various birds. In many parts of Scotland the lesser black-backed gulls have become the veriest vermin, in this respect rivalling the hooded crow and common rook, the latter another recent development of unwise over-preservation.

In the city of Prague a tip to the tramway conductor is considered de rigueur. The orthodox tip consists of but two heller, or two-tenths of a penny, yet as "strap hanging" is allowed for in considering the carrying capacity of the car the conductors should have got a goodly pocketful of the minimum coin by each day's end. Tipping, it was ascertained in another of Bohemia's larger towns, is so fully recognized that the head waiter at a cafe pays a rent for his post, supplies all the journals for the coffee room and looks after the other waiters, and then makes an income larger than that of a university professor—all out of his tips. After supper at one of the delightful open air cafes of the capital it was found that approximately one should give a half krone (fivepence) to the head waiter who took payment, twopence to the under waiter who brought the viands, and a halfpenny to the boy who brought—and even brought again as one glass was finished—the beer.

The aborigines of the Australian coastal regions, like most of the native South Sea Islanders, are extremely clever fishermen. In the case of the Australian native tackle is often confined to a slender hardwood spear, grotesquely carved. Armed with such a weapon the "black fellow" will take a perch upon some convenient rock and gaze steadily into the wonderfully transparent blue water. Intuition and long observation seem to supply an almost uncanny knowledge as to the habits and haunts of different fish at stated times, and it is no uncommon feat for this type of fisherman to rise suddenly to his feet and send his rude spear hurtling through thirty feet of space before it enters the water to pierce clean through the body of a

big schnapper, a fine mullet or a jew fish, almost as long as the fisherman is tall. Then the native leaps into the water and wades or swims ashore, dragging his prize after him by the gills.

Lovers of the occult and dabblers in psychology are studying the weird performances of a spiritualist Chinaman named Ah Foon, at Brighton Beach. It is said that students of the unseen world, which should not be confounded with the underworld, have declared that Ah Foon can rope and hog-tie about as many evanescent immaterialities as any spirit buster on two continents. The essences of the departed are made to write long verbatim extracts, selected from a book by a member of the audience, on the inner side of two clean slates tied together. The Chinese master repeats, word for word, a long political editorial that has been hurriedly read to him, and, by way of variety, puts a young woman to sleep on two sword points and causes her to go up in the air without visible means of support. The young woman came near being arrested the other day, it is said, on the charge that she lacked means of support, but Ah Foon explained that the spirits paid her bills.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

"Uncle Jehosaphat, I'm goin' to name my kitten after you." "Well, well! That is nice of you——" "Oh, it's all right. Mother says I've got to drown the thing anyhow."

"That man always gets along, and seems to be enterprising in other ways, yet he never handles anything which isn't a drug in the market." "What is his business?" "He's an apothecary."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Goodley, "just listen to that clergyman! I'm positive he's swearing. Evidently he's missed his vocation." "No," replied her husband. "I think it was his train."

"The play was full of complications, I understand." "Yes. First, we got the wrong seats, I mislaid my overcoat, and the girl I took finally located next to a gentleman friend who monopolized her entire conversation."

I—It is 10 P.M. They are seated in the parlor. "No," she says, bowing her head, "pa says I am too young to become engaged." II—It is just 1.30 A.M. They are still seated in the parlor. Suddenly, from somewhere upstairs, a gruff voice shouts: "Henrietta, if that fellow waits a little longer you'll be old enough to accept his proposal."

Mrs. A.—I thought Mrs. C. was a friend of yours? Mrs. B.—And so she is. Mrs. A.—Well, she isn't. She's a hypocrite. Mrs. B.—How do you know that? Mrs. A.—Because she tried to get me to say something mean about you. Mrs. B.—She did? How? Mrs. A.—Why, she asked me to tell her what I really thought of you.

The book agent had spent a discouraging morning, and when he had an opportunity to scan the face of Eli Hobbs at close range he felt that there was small chance of making a sale. However, he had more than one method of suggestion. "Sitting out here on the piazza afternoons with your wife, this would be the very book to read aloud," he said ingratiatingly to Mr. Hobbs, taking the other rocking chair and opening the large red-covered volume. "I don't read, and I haven't any wife," replied Mr. Hobbs, dryly. "Dear me," said the book agent. "Well, if your wife is dead perhaps there are children. Now children find this book——" "There are no children," interrupted Mr. Hobbs. "There's nobody but myself and my cat." "Well," said the book agent, "don't you ever want a good heavy book to throw at her, just to ease your feelings?"

WRECKED AMONG SAVAGES

By PAUL BRADDON.

The sailors were called to order, and the steward began his yarn as follows:

"About the third or fourth voyage I took, I remember the ship was beating about in rough weather like the Flying Dutchman, and there was not a soul on board who ever thought we should see land again.

"We was out in some unknown quarter, what even puzzled the skipper, and he knew his duties as good as any I've ever sailed under; but we got beat right out of our latitude, and almost gave ourselves up as lost.

"You all know, who've been in a similar case, how the men behave when the skipper sez blunt and plain that there ain't no hope; they take the command, or, as I should say, they don't take no command; but they take possession of what they want in such cases, and there's no obeying orders.

"We started from Cronstadt Harbor, and the crew I went out with was as good a set of men as ever was when the ship kept her course, but when they knew that they were as good as drowned men they broke out, and old Nick himself wouldn't have kept them in check.

"I had my duty to perform, and I must say all, from the cabin boy up to the skipper, respected me, because why, I ain't a going to say that I was any different to any other steward, but you always see I acted fair, square, and aboveboard with them, and if I could do anything to oblige them I used to do it; and, another thing is, they always had their grog in proper order, and plenty of it; but, as I was a saying, when they thought the ship must be lost they broke out, and helped themselves to what they wanted of the stores, and said they wasn't going to visit Davy Jones while the ship had a drop of grog on board.

"For five days nobody was ever sober aboard. I soon found I had to do as the rest of them did, or I should have been thrown overboard, so I had my share of the good things, and I knew it was more through drunkenness than anything else that we met with the accident that I am going to tell you about.

"The ship became a complete wreck; there was hardly a yard of canvas left in any part of her, and what there was hung in shreds. All the small spars and masts were splintered up and blown from her, and I never, in the whole course of my life, see a more wretched sight than that craft was, all through neglect and rough weather.

"The whole time we was buffeted about a thick heavy mist hung over us, and the sea never abated one jot.

"One night we was brought to our senses by the ship striking upon a rock and foundering. When the real state of affairs was known, or, leastways, when the ship was filling and going to pieces, there wasn't one too drunk to know the danger of our position, and although it was pitch dark, and the sea was washing over us, I never saw any boats lowered with more order and quickness than ours were.

"It was too dark, as I said before, to see where we was, but we knew we must be in danger, among rocks, and the sea running high, as it was rocking of us up and down, and breaking over us, making it considerably more dangerous.

"However, we all seemed pretty well to understand our peril, and we rowed round the ship to find a landing place.

"One of the boats, carried away from the rest by a wave, was thrown on to some rocks, and the men found themselves on secure footing.

"They called to the others, and in a few minutes every man Jack of us were landed high and dry, and had the boats landed up.

"We were on land, right enough—land where trees grew, for we could hear the leaves rattling as the wind howled through them, but on what land, or where, was a mystery.

"We went inland about half a mile, and, being afraid of going too far, in case of accidents, we made ourselves snug in the boat to wait for daybreak.

"We could hear the sea roaring all round us, and that kept us awake with fearful anxiety.

"The first gleam of daylight was welcomed with many a sigh of relief, and although we was all awful miserable, being wet through to the skin, shivering with cold, thirsty, and hungry, and shaky from the effects of too much grog, we was, nevertheless, thankful to find we was safe, and we began to examine our quarters.

"There lay the ship wrecked on the rocks that skirted the island we was on.

"The island was about three miles long and two broad, and shaped like an egg, and looked like a garden, with beautiful trees and flowers.

"As the midst cleared off a bit we sighted several other islands about us, some larger and some smaller than the one we was on, and right away to leeward lay a broad tract of land, rising in some places with great big hills and mountains, and quite black in other places with thick clusters of trees.

"There wasn't no signs or nobody living thereabouts, so far as we could see, but the island seemed well stocked with birds and small animals; but as we was all well-nigh starving, we returned to the wreck to see what we could find to eat and drink.

"The tide had gone down lower than when we struck, so there wasn't much water in the ship. Of course everything was spoiled by the sea. The biscuits was soaked to a pap, but, as there wasn't much of anything lost, and not knowing how long we should have to stay on the island, the biscuits were laid out to dry.

"All we had then was a few cases of preserved meat. There was a keg of grog and two kegs of fresh water. I shared a part of the things among the crew, and with a smoke we made ourselves pretty comfortable.

"We was startled all at once by the sound of yelling voices, and we got up to find out where the noise came from, thinking we was sighted; but not a sign of this strange warning could we discover in any direction.

"The yells were repeated every now and then, and made us a little uneasy, I can tell you. We kept a sharp lookout on all sides of the island. Presently the yells was stopped, and we waited and listened for them to commence again.

"Not another sound was heard for fully twenty minutes, and we was settling down again, when our attention was called to some objects bobbing up and down in the water.

"We all watched them with the greatest interest.

"There was forty or fifty what appeared to be large balls floating off the shore of the large track of land to leeward. What they was nobody could make out. They was coming towards us, that was clear, and what mystified us more than all was that the balls seemed to have something attached to them that glittered as they caught the sun's rays.

"A great many suggestions was made as to what they could be, but nobody hit the nail on the right head.

"All the heads, as they appeared to be, came nearer and nearer; they grew larger, and at last it was seen that they were heads of savages who were swimming to the island.

This was a very unpleasant surprise. We hardly knew what to do. There was only eighteen of us—not half the number of the savages—and the only arms we had was one rifle we had taken from the wreck; but this was no use to us, as the powder was destroyed by the water. A council of war was held. If we left our position in the boats the savages

would overhaul the contents of the wreck, and as there were many things there we should want, it was settled that we should stop and fight it out.

"We drew up all together, and the old guns were shown to advantage to frighten the savages; but they came on, not a bit frightened, and landed right under our very noses.

"When about twenty reached the shore they started for us, and set up another fearful yelling.

"I didn't like the look of 'em, but we all kept quiet and firm.

"They stopped when within reach of a stone's throw, and said something to one another.

"Of course none of us understood their lingo, but if the lubbers meant mutiny, we was ready for 'em.

"Presently one advanced, and made signs for one of us to do the same.

"The bo'sun went for'ard, and they began to make signs at each other, and twist their figure-heads into all manner of shapes.

"The lubbers want us to go back with them,' said the bo'sun.

"Tell 'em we'll see 'em hanged first,' returned the skipper.

"The bo'sun tried to convey the skipper's answer to the copper-colored fellow. He understood it, too, but he didn't look as if he liked it, for he scowled very much, and showed his gleaming teeth. But he smiled again as if he was all right and quite friendly-like.

"I could see that he was only trying to gain time. Swarms of savages was crossing the water towards us, and he was awaiting their arrival to make an attack on us.

"The boats were our only chance now, and we made a rush for them before the other savages was able to land.

"The savages made a rush after us, but they was nowhere in the race. The boats was launched and manned, and under weigh before any of the lubbers could overtake us.

"A passing ship saved us from dying of starvation."

THE WILD MAN OF THE WOODS

"Ned Johnson is an informer."

"He must die! He must die!" growled the men.

"Aye, but at whose hands?" continued Fighting Tom, a sobriquet Tom Fitzgerald had inherited because of the numberless brawls he was engaged in.

"If every man of you will swear with uplifted hand to keep the secret, and that no punishment will extort it from you, I will solemnly promise to kill Ned Johnson." Tom uttered the latter part of the threat with an emphasis that meant business.

"We will swear, we will swear," came in a chorus from the men.

"When and where shall the deed be committed?" came from the leader, who wished to give a semblance of official sanction of the Brotherhood to the contemplated act of Fighting Tom.

"Next Friday night, when the boss will be on his way home, near the ledge," added Tom.

When all had disappeared a strange-looking figure darted from behind a pillar of coal.

It was Crazy Ben Finch.

"Ah, ha," chuckled the old man. "The Molly Maguires had another secret meeting to-night. Some new deviltry is on foot again. No Fighting Tom is going to kill Ned Johnson, is he? Well, we shall see about that."

And Finch made his way through an old deserted part of the mine to a narrow tunnel that made a sharp ascent up the mountain on a round of a pitch in the vein, to an open ledge. Here was a small entrance, scarcely large enough to admit a man, which was hid and embowered by the sur-

rounding bushes that had got a foothold in the clefts of the rocks.

Ben Finch was a singular being. For more than half a century he had lived on Campbell's Ledge, where the noble Susquehanna breaks out from the mountains and opens its broad bosom in the fertile and beautiful Wyoming, so renowned in history and song as the scene of the great massacre.

Campbell's Ledge was noted as the spot from whose peak a man named Campbell had leaped when pursued by Indians.

On the very edge Ben Finch had built a cabin so projecting over the precipice that a plumb line at the top would fall outside of the line of base.

It was held in its position by bolts driven into the rock.

Whenever Ben Finch appeared in his quaint dress on the streets of Avondale the children ran after him crying out, "Crazy Finch! Crazy Finch!" and he would turn and laugh at their childish amusement.

* * * * *

The shades of evening were drawing on. The sun's last rays were just fading from the tips of the ledge when Ben Finch was looking out of a window in the upper story of his cabin.

"There comes Ned Johnson from the mines. He's on his way home by the back road."

And Finch was on his feet, clambering down the ladder, and soon descending the mountain by a narrow by-path till he came to a dense thicket near the road, where he secreted himself.

Ned Johnson, the mine boss, went by whistling a jolly air.

Crack! Bang!

The report of two pistol shots, fired in rapid succession, rang on the air, and Ned fell, wounded, to the ground.

In an instant Finch leaped into the thicket whence the smoke proceeded, and he saw a retreating figure. He sprang like an antelope, and was soon at the heels of the man, and then, in another moment, he had seized him by the collar. The man turned and exclaimed:

"Crazy Ben Finch!"

"Yes, but not so crazy, Fighting Tom, as not to know that you have committed a great crime. You are a murderer and a villain of the deepest dye."

Crazy Ben choked Tom into a state of insensibility, threw him on his shoulder and bore him up the path to the cabin and to the upper story, where he laid Tom on the floor, where he recovered.

Finch went to an old curiosity shelf to get some cords to bind his prisoner, and while his back was turned Tom leaped toward him with an uplifted dagger which he had secreted, and if Finch had not detected the movement in time, it would have pierced his heart; as it was, it cut into the flesh of his left arm.

Then the struggle was renewed. The two men were in a life and death encounter. Getting a new grip on Tom, Finch flung him against the window, which was dashed into pieces, and Tom rolled out, and was held suspended over the awful precipice by Finch's powerful grip.

"Both of us will die together," cried the villain, and with that he pulled Finch partly through the window. The latter, seeing his perilous position, let go his hold, and Fighting Tom's body went flying through the air into the deep abyss, where it was dashed to pieces on the jagged rocks.

Hastening down the mountain Finch came upon Ned Johnson, who had received a pistol shot in the shoulder. Finch assisted him home. The news of the attempted assassination spread like wildfire through Avondale.

The ringleaders of the Molly Maguire order were arrested, and as history records, many of them were executed for the murders traced to their hands.

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